

# IJPLC | INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PRESENCING LEADERSHIP & COACHING

## EDITORIAL

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Olen Gunnlaugson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor in Leadership & Coaching, Faculty of Business, Université Laval

### Introductory Remarks

Welcome to the Inaugural Issue of the *International Journal of Presencing Leadership & Coaching*! As many of you will be aware of presencing through the contributions of Otto Scharmer and colleagues with the Presencing Institute, Theory U, ULAB and JASC—these substantive projects have played a lead role in bringing together a global network of conscientious leaders, communities and organizations who are committed to stewarding a more promising future for all.

Alongside the above developments, over the past decade colleagues and I have published a growing body of research focusing on advancing the emerging field of presencing through the publication of several anthologies (Gunnlaugson et al., 2013; Gunnlaugson & Brendel, 2019, 2020, 2021). These four in-depth peer-reviewed scholar-practitioner books provide an engaging overview of the thinking and research from our wider international community of scholar practitioners, independent researchers, consultants and many others. With a growing number of articles on presencing across a broad range of peer-reviewed academic journals, together our collective efforts have supported and developed Theory U-based presencing scholarship and practice in seminal ways since its inception.

In both contributing to as well as reflecting on the developmental unfolding and overall trajectory of the greater emerging presencing field, it has become apparent that there is a growing need for approaches that address the deeper underlying territory of presencing, particularly in leadership and coaching contexts. Recently, I've made a case for opening up a new direction with presencing scholarship by advocating both continued research within the Theory U-paradigm as well as encouraging exploratory paths of research and practice going forward, through what I call *emerging presencing approaches* (EPAs) (Gunnlaugson, 2023).

Tracing the roots of presencing back to different Eastern, Indigenous, and global wisdom traditions, including early Greek practice, contemporary western philosophy including Existential philosopher Martin Heidegger's languaging and thinking on presencing, among other contributions, it is important to acknowledge that the subject, word itself and overall practice of presencing has a longer and diverse history that predates Theory U and current interest in the subject (Gunnlaugson, 2023).

From the early 2000s, organizational consultants Peter Senge, Joseph Jaworski, Otto Scharmer, and colleagues, offered a new direction and approach with their book Presence, which played a catalytic role in bringing presencing to mainstream awareness as an integrative leadership approach for learning from the emerging future. Alongside these older as well as more contemporary expressions of presencing, the earlier thinking of Francisco Varela's phenomenological method, Joseph Jaworski's storied journey of Source as an inner path of knowledge creation, and more recently my work with Dynamic Presencing focusing on a more in-depth overall mastery approach to presencing as a generative way of being have continued to clarify and excavate the deeper interior dimensions of presencing practice.

Building from these different works, our current Inaugural Issue of the *International Journal of Presencing Leadership & Coaching* (IJPLC) showcases nine peer-reviewed *Featured Articles* and three *Academic Think Pieces*. Delving into the theme of developing presencing mastery, these contributions explore both in theory as well as in practice what is needed to develop, sustain and advance different forms and approaches to presencing mastery in leadership as well as in coaching contexts. The central theme concerning the shift from presencing *as a way of knowing* to presencing *as a generative way of being* is taken up as a red thread throughout many of the works, also imparting new insight into how presencing practice as a whole can benefit from this deeper shift in orientation on many levels. Overall, these feature articles and academic think pieces introduce important distinctions, frameworks and expanded accounts of presencing mastery, illustrating *how* as well as *why* this greater aim holds a crucial key to a continued development of the deeper potentials of presencing, particularly in contexts of presencing leadership and coaching practice.

## Opening up a New Horizon in the Emerging Field of Presencing

As an alternative, independent peer-reviewed journal that is not affiliated with the Presencing Institute's *Journal of Awareness-Based Systems Change* (JASC), the IJPLC aspires to become a place for new thinking that is attempting to evolve the deeper dimensions of presencing practice within the applied domains of leadership and coaching, and by extension, the greater field of presencing research. Where the scope of JASC has a cross-sectoral, inter- and transdisciplinary focus on awareness-based systems change through social field perspectives, IJPLC is specialized in rethinking as well as exploring the deeper transformational potential of presencing.

In response to a growing global awareness and interest in presencing, IJPLC aspires to support a continued evolution of diverse methods and approaches. As a generative scholar-practitioner voice, the IJPLC is committed to strengthening leadership and coaching applications, as well as introducing new directions within the greater field of presencing. We look forward to what the future will bring through this emerging wisdom lineage of theory and practice in the coming years and decades ahead!

For the purposes of giving recognition to, as well as differentiating the respective stages of presencing theory and practice, figure 1 below acknowledges the diverse historical roots of presencing from its initial *first stage* {pre-Theory U}, to its current more established *second stage* {Theory U} to its also current, yet still emerging *third stage* {Theory U and EPAs}.

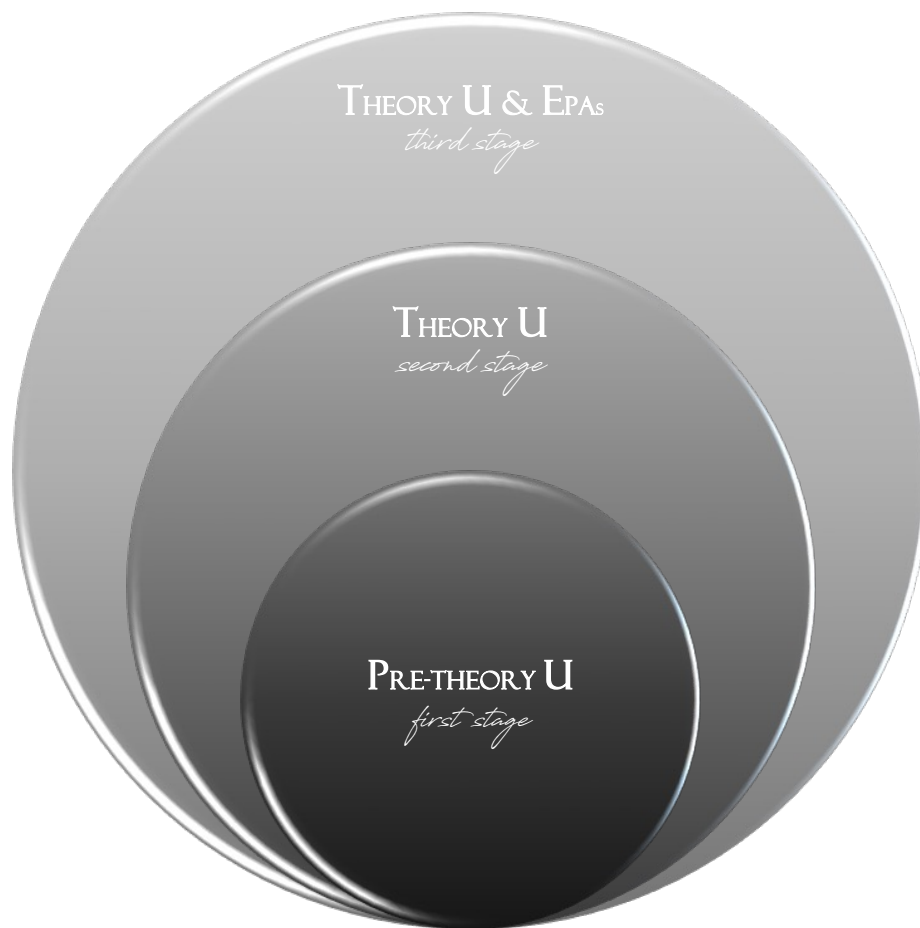


Figure 1. The Three Stages of Presencing Theory & Practice

If the current emerging *third stage* of presencing research is going to become viable in the future, as I've made a case for, there is currently a need for further developing a *plurality* of presencing frameworks, methods and overall approaches that welcome alternative *third stage* ways of thinking, critical perspectives and narratives.

In doing this, presencing researchers and practitioners regardless of their ideological or institutional affiliations, can develop a richer overall sense of

the field as a whole in ways that acknowledge points of similarity, convergence as well as divergence among the respective approaches. This is necessary to begin to establish fertile grounds for creative renewal as well as open new territory where a broader diversity of presencing practices, research and future inquiry can be explored.

Given this growing practical need for *third stage*, cross-paradigmatic research and scholarship that supports the growth and development of diverse forms and representations of presencing theory and practice, IJPLC is well positioned to support existing as well as emerging presencing approaches across leadership and coaching contexts. To open new pathways into healthy *third stage* presencing practice, there is a need for continued living inquiry, in-depth questioning as well as immersive engagement within the Theory-U-based paradigm, as well as within neighboring EPAs. In doing this, the complex needs of practitioners across different presencing communities of practice globally can be more effectively represented and engaged in the years and decades ahead for those who are called to join us in this larger conversation.

### Inviting Future *Third Stage* Presencing Contributions

Each of the articles in this Inaugural Issue of IJPLC have undergone our peer-review process with members from our global team of Associate Editors and myself. Additionally as an official OJS Journal, we are pleased to have been generously offered full institutional support and licencing (complete with an ISSN, DOI's and full OJS support) from my home university, Université Laval, Québec, Canada, which has officially become the publisher and place of publication for IJPLC. In speaking with our ULAVAL team recently, they are enthusiastic to index the journal in a number of specialized academic databases, among other promising initiatives in the months ahead.

For this Inaugural Issue of IJPLC, the focus is on the theme of *Developing Presencing Mastery*. The second Issue will focus on *Presencing Embodiment*, and the third Issue explores the theme of *Collective Leadership*, with a Special Issue already planned on *Presencing Approaches to Coaching*. Contributions for the next three issues are currently being reviewed, with new submissions welcome to each of the above issues. Email me directly if you have a proposal in mind: [Olen.Gunnlaugson@fsa.ulaval.ca](mailto:Olen.Gunnlaugson@fsa.ulaval.ca)

As a final aside, I feel it is important to address the subject of having Associate Editors and the Editor-in-Chief publish within their own journal. This practice tends to be discouraged by traditional scientific and medical journals that publish mainly empirical research. However, there are circumstances in more progressive theoretical research-based social sciences and business journals like IJPLC that take exception to this principle when the subject of research, the focus of the journal as well as the field of scholarship are in their early stages and there are limited options for publishing such specialized research.

Given that we find ourselves in such an occasion that touches on all of these four conditions, particularly concerning both the current limited options for publication as well as publishing in an emerging niche subject/journal/field, we are open to considering all submissions in equal measure. Meaning, it would be equally unfair to exclude submissions from either our team of Associate Editors or myself as Editor-in-Chief given these current circumstances.

To the extent that this inclusive practice is becoming more widely accepted among progressive journals and scholar-practitioners when conditions support it, as an additional gesture to support the development of EPAs, we are opening an exploratory sub-section entitled “Academic Think Pieces” that is separate from our main section of “Feature Articles.”

As EPAs case examples are still quite limited currently, my hope is this sub-section will eventually emerge as a robust space of engagement for future issues. For the current inaugural issue, these Academic Think Pieces showcase new thinking from my recent year-long Sabbatical as Visiting Professor at the John Molson School of Business at Concordia University, Montreal. Hopefully for our forthcoming issues, our readers and authors will grow to appreciate the value of this sub-section and more importantly, that I won't be the only one submitting contributions to it!

Going forward, I whole heartedly look forward to your interest and engagement with the *International Journal of Presencing Leadership & Coaching* as a current reader and future contributing author.

May our diverse efforts and generative offerings catch fire and inspire something deep and essential in you to come forth and join us in building *third stage* presencing contributions in future issues!



OLEN GUNNLAUGSON, Ph.D. serves as an Associate Professor in Leadership & Coaching within the Department of Management in the EQUIS, AACSB & PRME accredited Business School at Université Laval, in Québec, Canada. With an interdisciplinary research background in presencing leadership and coaching development, he received his Ph.D. at the University of British Columbia and did his Post-Doctorate at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada.

To date, his current and forthcoming research has been published internationally in 15 edited books as well as over 50 articles and chapters in leading academic journals and books. He has presented and keynoted at numerous international conferences and received five prestigious faculty level awards for excellence in teaching from universities in Canada and the USA. Over the past twenty years in his Master-level classes, he has taught and coached several thousand students (mainly emerging leaders, managers and executives) at universities in Canada, USA, Austria, Sweden, South Africa and South Korea.

Globally, his current research focuses on supporting those leaders, managers and coaches who aspire to develop personal mastery in leading their lives and work from an inner place of deeply resourced presence, presencing and embodied practical wisdom. Connected with this work, over the past decade he has served as lead editor of the academic-practitioner book, "Perspectives on Theory U: Insights from the Field" as well as the three volume book series, "Advances in Presencing." Recently he stepped into the thought leadership role as editor in chief of the new *International Journal of Presencing Leadership & Coaching* to continue building this exciting new field of applied practice.

Contact: [Olen.Gunnlaugson@fsa.ulaval.ca](mailto:Olen.Gunnlaugson@fsa.ulaval.ca)