AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PUBLISHED WORKS OF FRITZ PERLS

DISSERTATION

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by

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Large sections of the dissertation are devoted to the intellectual, philosophical, and emotional influences that led Perls to write the theory of Gestalt therapy. The dissertation concludes with the report of Perls' position on each defined continuum, with discussion of empirical studies, Gestalt therapy and other major theories of counseling that hold parallel theoretical positions, concluding with a discussion of the limitations of the theory of Gestalt therapy and of this dissertation.
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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND, NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The theory and practice of counseling are intended to be fruitful and increasingly integrative as they attempt to meet both theoretical and practical needs of theoreticians and practitioners in their relationships with clients (From, 1984). Counseling theories should be built upon solid theoretical foundations. They do not end with the death of the pioneer writer nor necessarily evolve after it. Though counseling theories are not intended to be static and, indeed, are often referred to as counseling movements (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951), this writer argued the idea that one must be cognizant of the founder's writings and intentions in the establishment of the counseling theory. According to Marcus (1980), without a correct understanding and tracing of the founder's ideas and proposals, the current theoretician or practitioner may be left with uncertainty, misinterpretation, and misapplication of the concepts presented by the founder of the counseling theory.

Evident throughout the published writings of Fritz Perls are the developmental thoughts and experiences of the
primary founder of the theory and practice of Gestalt therapy (From, 1984). It was not necessarily the intention of Perls to write a definitive literary work describing the theory of Gestalt therapy applicable only to his time period (Elkin, 1979). It was Perls' intention to present through concurrent publications his evolving theory of understanding and explanation of the human being's behavior, emotions, and cognitive processes (Wysong, 1985). Perls (1947) wrote that his intention was to establish a theoretical baseline, knowing that future theoreticians and practitioners might de-structure and assimilate other thoughts and experiences to the theory. Evidence that current practitioners and theoreticians have indeed de-structured and assimilated other beliefs with the foundational writings of Perls can be found within the differences of the fifty-three Gestalt training institutes in the United States, regarding the teaching of basic Gestalt concepts, within The Gestalt Journal, and in current writings of leading Gestalt therapists. Whether or not current theorists and practitioners of Gestalt therapy have deviated from Perls' writings to the degree of establishing a different theory with similar nomenclature seems a valid question.

At present there is a steady growth in the number of professionals providing counseling services who identify with the theory of Gestalt therapy (Perls, L., 1986). Due to the theory's impact, acceptance, and age, it is now
commonly referenced within the counseling community and within preparation programs of master's and doctoral level counselors (Perls, L., Polster, M., Yontef, Zinker, & Miller, 1981). Among their many purposes, professional organizations afford identification and collegiality among counselors who have integrated the theory of Gestalt therapy into their practices. The developmental theoretical structure of Gestalt therapy finds its origin in collegial organizations which can be traced back to Perls' establishment of a psychoanalytic association in South Africa. Though this collegiality and identification of counselors as Gestalt therapists exists, it may be difficult to identify in what way, and to what extent, counselors actually identify with the major aspects of the theory of Gestalt Therapy (Latner, 1988).

The Gestalt Journal publishes an annual directory that lists current theoreticians and practitioners of Gestalt therapy. Within the directory one finds a listing of Gestalt therapists who either identify themselves exclusively with Gestalt therapy, or with Gestalt therapy and other theories. In view of the preponderance of dual or multiple theoretical associations, one may wonder either if the theory of Gestalt therapy is inadequate, somehow less than a complete theory, or if some of the practitioners of the theory have decided to continue the growth and evolution of Gestalt therapy by integrating it with other theories. A
question arises as to whether or not these theorists have adequately integrated concepts and constructs to the theory of Gestalt therapy from the foundational writings of Fritz Perls (Wysong, 1988).

One might question whether texts used in courses of study in advanced counseling theories adequately align with the originator's originally documented thoughts and tenets. Even when the textbook, or chapter within the textbook, is authored by the originator of the theory one must be cognizant of the fact that the writing represents only the author's present interpretations of human behavior, affect, and cognition, and may or may not represent the totality of thought prior to the current writing (Polster, M., 1988).

Discussion of Historical Research

E. G. Boring (1950), a renowned historian in the field of psychology, noted that one who neglects history "... sees the present in a distorted perspective, ... mistakes old facts for new, and ... remains unable to evaluate the significance of new movements and methods" (p. ix). It seems that these forewarnings may not have been heeded in some of the present writings of persons associated with Gestalt therapy (Davido, Latner, Miller, Nevis, & Tobin, 1985). From (1984) stated that Gestalt therapy, when properly understood, had and has a contribution to make to the mitigation of neurotic and psychotic misery. A detailed
historical analysis investigating the rationale, development, and objectives of the many facets and theoretical tenets presented in the writings of Perls is needed to begin to establish an understanding of the Gestalt therapy movement that attempts to mitigate such misery.

Much of the work in establishing a rationale for historical research has been done (Engels, 1975). Engels (1975) considered the vast amount of experimental and quasi-experimental research that has been conducted within the fields of counseling and psychology, and questioned the paucity of historical research within these disciplines. Without denying the importance of other types of research, he reasoned that such research is essential and that the scarcity of historical research may be a result of the lack of researchers to search and uncover true topical themes in the evolution of major figures within counseling or psychology. This writer accepts this rationale as assumptions of both scholarly research, and appropriate to this dissertation.

Boring (1950) believed that there are two theoretical ways of viewing the analysis and writing of history. The two ways are described as personalistic and naturalistic. The personalistic approach attempts to analyze achievements and contributions of leading individuals within a field. The naturalistic perspective selects for discussion significant issues relating to the sociological phenomena
surrounding the time of the article under historical analysis. Boring (1950) advanced the idea that this apparent dichotomy may be a false dichotomy, in that both approaches may be combined and used as one inclusive approach. Historical research lends itself to a combination of personalistic and naturalistic approaches, and this author adopts this theoretical position.

Engels (1975) discussed the selection of significant events from the historical system under analysis and concluded that it is subjectively determined. Engels said:

Historical truth is elusive. We must recognize the changing nature of historical 'fact', for we cannot unequivocally determine the causes and effects of events that took place in times past. The historian is unable to manipulate, in a manner similar to the scientist, the 'independent variables' of history.

(1975, p. 7)

Historical research is based on subjective selectivity of the researcher. This selectivity however is not conducted within a closed framework, but operates under the scholarly conditions of presenting the concepts under analysis while incorporating conflicting and conforming opinions.

One major goal of historical inquiry is to clarify present-day practices and problems by providing an historical knowledge base and perspective (Good, 1972).

Knowledge gained through historical inquiry can provide the
foundation for better understanding of current counseling questions and can contribute to a better understanding of current counseling methods and techniques by providing the reader with an accurate baseline and developmental perspective. One key to valid historical research is the use of acceptable procedures. One such procedure is the use of inductive reasoning to obtain accurate answers to educational questions from varied data that may range from vast amounts of potential data for some questions to very limited information about other questions.

According to Hopkins (1980) historical researchers need to be aware of the pitfall of presentism; the imposition of modern thought patterns on an earlier era. This does not mean that historical criticism can not lend itself to usable conclusions. Hopkins (1980) defined criticism as the scientific investigation of collected information focusing on matters of origin and validity. Criticism can be either external or internal. External criticism examines the authenticity of the information; i.e., is the information genuine? Internal criticism investigates the meaning and trustworthiness of evidence, and the meaning attached to the documents or artifacts. The historical method of research utilizes particular procedures to verify the accuracy of statements about the past, to establish relationships, and, when possible, to determine the direction of cause and effect (Good, 1972).
Good (1972) claimed that the historical researcher works under a greater handicap than other researchers in that this type of research must use existing information. The historical researcher can not exert control over what information remains for study; therefore no valid assumptions can be made about whether something did not exist or did not take place simply because no record can be found. The limitations listed above require the historical researcher to function differently from researchers engaged in other types of inquiry procedures. Historical research techniques take an approach to inquiry similar to the scientific method, with some necessary adaptations. According to Hopkins historical inquiry begins when an indeterminate situation raises a question, an answer for which may be found in the analysis of past documents or artifacts. It continues as a critical search for truth and ends with a defensible conclusion. The steps in historical research according to Hopkins (1980) are as follows:

1. Identifying and isolating the problems.
2. Developing a research hypothesis.
3. Accumulating and classifying source materials.
4. Analysis of the source materials using scientific criticism.
5. Synthesizing and presenting the research in an organized form.
6. Forming conclusions.
7. Attending to lessons learned and implications for theory and practice.
8. Reporting, discriminating, and discussing those lessons and implications.

Historical research is especially useful in obtaining knowledge about previously unexamined areas, in reexamining questions where the answers are not as definite as desired, and where present accounts, if available, are inadequate (Hopkins). According to Hopkins historically based problems can be delimited or isolated along any of four dimensions: time, geographic area, person involved, and activities.

Historical studies commence only after a question has been clearly stated in a form that will give the needed direction for the research. The identification and delimitation stage in approaching historical problems can be important in helping avoid collecting data with no expressed use for the information.

Hempel (1973) claimed that the test of the hypothesis in historical research is different from the test used in experimental research and is, therefore, less acceptable within the rules of science. Hempel was referring specifically to the manipulation of variables, which does not exist in historical research but is crucial to experimental research. Hempel suggested that all hypotheses, regardless of the type of scientific inquiry, be at least testable in principle. He went on to suggest that
the hypothesis can provide a way of bridging from data
gathered to theory proposed. Within historical research
there is no way to test the hypothesis directly (Hopkins,
1980) and the answer to the question, the question being a
felt need of the researcher, must be based on the materials
collected for the study. For this reason some historians
prefer to begin their work without a definitively stated
hypothesis. One value of the historical hypothesis rests in
its directing role, providing something to refute or
support. It can help make the drawing of conclusions
objective. For this reason this researcher will make use of
the hypothesis.

According to Hopkins (1980) the following sources and
materials are available to historical research: physical
remains, such as bones; orally transmitted material;
artistic material such as sculptures or paintings;
hand-written materials; printed books, papers, and
literature; motion-picture film; audio recordings; and
personal observation. These sources may be classified
either as documents or relics, according to whether the
source was created for the express purpose of making a
record, whether it is an artifact or whether it might have
some other purpose. This writer is mindful that neither
relics nor documents seem to be preferred within historical
research, and it has been suggested that this dichotomy may
even be a false one (D. W. Engels, personal communication,
August 2, 1988). Each of these sources is valuable to the researcher in a different way; the documents offer their objectivity and directness in reporting, and the relics in the interpretation of their information. Documents present data in a more direct, straightforward manner, that requires less interpretation. Relics, by their very nature, require more interpretation. It is through the use of historical inquiry that this researcher has analyzed the published documents of Fritz Perls for the purposes of establishing an accurate foundational baseline of the theory of Gestalt Therapy.

Significance of Historical Research in Counseling

It is important to this researcher to realize that many theorists have altered their thoughts and interpretations of human behavior as they have evolved from earlier to later writings. As important as the fact that the writings have changed is the rationale for such a change. The rationale may be as simple as Freud's socio/political decision to encapsulate his theory within biological terminology for the purpose of acceptance within the medical community of the nineteenth century or it may be as complex as Freud's definition and use of the word anxiety which took on at least three distinct meanings throughout his writings (From, 1988).

It would seem essential, then, for the student of
advanced counseling theories to have a thorough understanding of major theorists within the historical perspective in which they wrote, the population the theorists addressed in formulating their interpretations, and the sociological, philosophical and political climates that the theorists experienced.

An example of possible misinterpretation might be a student reading an early writing of Carl Rogers, written prior to the client-centered stage of development, and a writing that postdated this time. The student may interpret the theory very differently with regards to crucial theoretical constructs unless there existed a document that could be used as a reference point that traced the consistency of the foundational thoughts of the theory.

It is this type of consistency that this writer has attempted to present in this dissertation. This dissertation presents an analysis of the published works of Fritz Perls according to their chronological publication date and an investigation of topical themes presented throughout the collection of his works, using the constructs delineated in the "Definition of Terms" section of this introduction. It is the purpose of this dissertation to provide an analysis of the evolution in thought that Perls has described in his collection of works.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to trace the development
of theoretical constructs and tenets presented throughout the writings and publications of Fritz Perls from his first published lecture that is captured in *Ego, Hunger and Aggression* (Perls, 1947) to his last known article, published posthumously in 1979. A goal of this dissertation was to establish an accurate account of Perls' theoretical constructs and tenets, and present a document that reports a foundational baseline for practitioners and researchers. This baseline was constructed through the analysis and synthesis of this researcher who used the published works of Fritz Perls; critiques of his works by major figures in Gestalt therapy, including telephone interviews with major figures; and critiques of his works by major figures outside the theoretical field of Gestalt Therapy. This study was developed as an objective scholarly synthesis of the works and critiques of the constructs Perls presented. It was the hope of this writer that theoreticians and practitioners use this information to broaden their knowledge base in their evaluation of the effectiveness of the theory in their study and practice of counseling.

**Significance of Historical Research in Gestalt Therapy**

During the course of advanced study of counseling theories, one question is raised that seems to be of particular relevance to this study. The question is whether or not the current student, theoretician, or practitioner of
the theory understands the contexts, constructs, and tenets presented by the originator of the theory. This question, though asked in university theory courses, seems to need more attention through a thorough investigation (Harman, 1984). That this writer found no comprehensive document tracing the theoretical tenets presented throughout the writings of Fritz Perls, in spite of a comprehensive search, serves to validate this effort to further current understanding and application of the theory.

In a comprehensive developmental document one might find information that would lead to a better understanding of issues that seem confusing; e.g. presentism as described by Polster (1985). Polster criticized the conceptual writings of Perls regarding the issue of present oriented therapy. In so doing Polster responded to, and referenced only later writings of Perls. Hence Polster seems to have been remiss in his understanding of Perls' developmental thoughts regarding this issue. It would seem that theorists within the Gestalt movement may need to increase their own awareness when responding to, or offering a critique of Perls' work (Wysong, 1988). Though Polster may not have intended to ignore Perls earlier works, existence of a reference document may have eliminated such an error.

Fritz Perls, who questioned the basic concepts of psychoanalysis, saw the possibility of the then not respectable Gestalt psychology and wrote a remarkable theory
of psychotherapy (From, 1984). This great thinker, however, dealt almost exclusively with techniques in his later writings. Without attention to his earlier writings, particularly *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression* (Perls, 1947) the student of Gestalt therapy will no doubt suffer an inadequate interpretation of the theory of Gestalt therapy (Miller, 1988).

**Presentism**

Some terms introduced by theorists suffer in interpretation from presentism; for example Freudian nomenclature that is found within current Gestalt therapy, for example the term 'Ego', which has a structural meaning in psychoanalysis while in Gestalt therapy it takes on a descriptive meaning suggestive of the individual's awareness of self. The existence of presentism is often found in Gestalt therapy training institutes, which may yield an explanation for the vast diversity in application and techniques taught from one institute to another (Brown, 1987).

**Labelling**

As mentioned above, throughout the Directory of Practicing Gestalt therapists there is a common practice of listing oneself as a Gestalt therapist and also identifying oneself with another theory. It may be difficult for the
larger counseling community to understand the label or self-identification of a counselor as a Gestalt therapist. There exists no standard training format of Gestalt therapists; yet each training institute claims to be the training center that has accurately interpreted the practice of Gestalt therapy (Brown, 1987). This certainly bespeaks a need for a research document that traces the concepts that Perls introduced.

With an understanding of this document one would be able to discern if the person identified as a Gestalt therapist is indeed a Gestalt therapist or someone who may have adopted particular techniques from the theory and identifies with the theory, without understanding the essence of the theory.

It is not the intention of this writer to suggest that a value be placed upon either a purist or nonpurist interpretation of Gestalt therapy, but rather to suggest that these terms, 'Gestalt therapy' and 'Gestalt therapist', require definition. One of the objectives of this dissertation has been to address and define the theory according to a scholarly inquiry into various interpretations that have been attributed to Perls' published works, with the addition of a synthesis of these interpretations and opinions.

In order to appropriately synthesize these interpretations it was necessary first to appreciate the
similarities between Gestalt therapy and other theories (Bernstein, 1980). It likewise was important to realize that Perls did not develop his theory in a vacuum devoid of understanding or influence from theorists who predated him. Perls certainly was influenced by other theoreticians and they are well noted within his writings.

Psychoanalysis

Of primary importance was the influence of Sigmund Freud (Perls, 1947; Laborde, 1979). Perls, who had been trained as a psychoanalyst by three analysts, practiced psychoanalysis for nearly twenty years culminating in South Africa where he established a psychoanalytic association (Perls, 1969b). Laura Perls (Naranjo, 1982) stated that her husband never really gave up psychoanalysis. Laborde (1979) suggested that this sentiment continues to be repeated by modern Gestaltists where Freudian nomenclature once used by Perls is again finding a place in Gestalt therapy, though often with different meanings from what both Perls and Freud had intended.

Wysong (1985) questioned whether it was Fritz Perls who never totally dissociated with psychoanalysis or whether it was Laura Perls who never completely dissociated with psychoanalysis. Humphrey (1986) commented on this concern and suggested that Laura Perls' statement was but a projection of her own need to maintain psychoanalytic theory
within Gestalt therapy, though possibly in a de-structured and assimilated form.

Perls' Formal Break with Psychoanalysis

Fritz Perls formally began his break with Freud during a Psychoanalytic Conference in Czechoslovakia where he presented a paper that questioned the logic and interpretations of the writings of Freud (From, 1984). The ideas and constructs of this paper were incorporated in *Ego, Hunger and Aggression* (Perls, 1947). According to From (1984) Perls' informal break with Freud started with Perls' questioning of the Freudian psychoanalytic developmental model in which it was claimed introjection was necessary for the child until age five or six. Perls asserted that Freud had neglected the psychological and emotional significance of the early development of teeth in the infant. This meant that the need to uncritically introject might cease much earlier than psychoanalytic theory claimed.

Other Influences

Though Freud is considered to be a primary influence on Perls' considerations of human behavior and motivation, he was not the sole influence. Other influences that helped shape the original thinking of Perls included; Laura Perls, Kurt Goldstein, Ralph Hefferline, Paul Goodman, Otto Rank, Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Kohler, Wilhelm Reich, and the
philosophical concepts of field theory, existentialism, the I-Thou relationship and phenomenology, paradoxical theory of change, holism, present-centeredness, and Nietzsche's atheism (Perls, L. et al., 1981).

Modern writers who identify themselves as Gestalt Therapists, such as the Polsters and the Gouldings, admittedly have moved away from the original writings of Perls (Polster, 1986). The Polsters have used many of the concepts of Gestalt therapy while integrating them with Eriksonian hypnotherapy, and the Gouldings have furthered a very popular adaptation blending Gestalt therapy with Transactional Analysis. From (1984) eloquently addressed these oftentimes curious combinational configurations and hypothesized that their creation was an effort to enliven the practice of Gestalt therapy after the death of Perls.

From (1984) suggested that the mindset of a bag of techniques, or the development of a new technique each year, ended with the death of Perls. From (1984) also suggested that as a result of Perls' death some individuals began a quasi-Gestalt therapy movement with creative technical combinational configurations without addressing theoretical foundations of Gestalt therapy in the hopes of keeping the therapy alive.

The theory has been blended with other theories and currently continues to be blended with current adaptations, such as Gestalt-Neuro-lingistic Programming combinations and
possibly even others. According to Wysong (1988) current writers are attempting to counter attacks upon the theory or to redress a criticism by adding to the theory an aspect that another theory addresses; hence the combinational configurations.

Another criticism was that Perls was anti-intellectual (Corsini, 1984). Some current writers have responded to such criticism by extrapolating a response from another theory without recognition that this criticism seems to be made with little insight into the historical foundations of the theory (From, 1984). From (1984) stated that:

Goodman wrote for an audience completely familiar with classical psychoanalysis. Being intellectual, at least at that time in the development of the theory, was not considered to be "mind fucking". (p. 11)

With an accurate understanding of the theory of Gestalt therapy one begins to realize that Perls was not anti-intellectual but rather viewed the intellect on a continuum of cognition and emotionality (Perls, 1947). Perls viewed the intellect as one aspect of the holistic person. Artificial dichotomies between intellect and affect are nonsensical in the theory of Gestalt therapy (Perls 1947; Perls, et al. 1951; Perls, 1969a). It is not necessary to incorporate a cognitive based theory with Gestalt therapy in an attempt to counteract the criticism of anti-intellectualism, but rather to analyze the writings of
Perls and to make no further conclusions than the holism with which he viewed the human being.

Alleged anti-intellectual statements as well as apparently crude or abrasive language, for example the term "mind fucking," are not intended to be interpreted in isolation from the totality of Perls' writings, nor are the techniques he described in his later writings. These criticisms of the theory, as well as others, are presented in their analyzed form in this dissertation.

Perls' Inconsistency

Perls was at times inconsistent in his writings (Wysong, 1985). For example Rank's construct of the "here and now", often erroneously attributed to Perls, stated that the only time there is, is the present (1936). Perls described this construct and stated that he accepted it wholeheartedly as defined by Rank (Perls 1969a). This acceptance is inconsistent with the philosophical tenets Perls presented throughout his writings and could be considered merely a pseudo-philosophical statement made by Perls in relation to the socio/political climate of the 1960's (From, 1984). Unfortunately there were individuals associated with Gestalt Therapy who published works that alluded to this construct in isolation. The published works led to confusion by a readership that was familiar with Perls' collection of works, while suggesting that an inaccuracy was a truth to a
readership unfamiliar with Perls' collection of works (Marcus, 1980).

Theoretical Continua

This dissertation includes discussion of the following dichotomies, often viewed by Perls as nonsensical, in an attempt to adequately identify Perls' thoughts on each of the following continua. The continua were discussed in a course offered by Dr. Bobbie Wilborn, Chair of the Department of Counselor Education at the University of North Texas, and are as follows: 1. Determinism vs. Free Will, 2. Unconscious vs. Conscious, 3. Monism vs. Dualism, 4. Physical vs. Mental, 5. Nativism vs. Environmentalism, 6. Elementalism vs. Holism, 7. Reactive vs. Proactive, 8. Subjective vs. Objective, 9. Responsibility vs. Helplessness, 10. Thinking vs. Feeling, and 11. Heterostasis vs. Homeostasis. These terms are explained in the Definition of Terms section of this introduction.

One of the goals of this dissertation was to trace the theoretical tenets of Perls while addressing the above list, the significance of which is that the counseling community has a synthesized document adding to the greater knowledge base of Perls' presented constructs. An analysis of the above theoretical considerations was conducted and is presented in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. This writer hopes that a better understanding of the practice of
Gestalt therapy is gleaned by the reader as a result of this analysis. It is this writer's belief that from theory come techniques; hence a theoretical rationale is offered regarding the primary techniques of Gestalt therapy; for example, individual counseling versus group counseling. Perls (1947, 1969a) reported that he began as a psychotherapist by using individual counseling exclusively and through the course of his practice and writings concluded that group counseling was his preferred mode of treatment. Other significant practices such as dream interpretations, the use of the empty chair, the concept and application of present centeredness, and the top/dog under/dog dialogue are also discussed. The concepts presented by the eastern philosophers, particularly the Tao, and how Perls interpreted these eastern beliefs after his studies in Kyoto, are also described. Corsini (1984) suggested in his preface that humanistic counseling approaches imply the hope of increasing human freedom by furthering individuals' understanding of their behavior and motivation for such behavior. The successful integration of Gestalt therapy as presented by its primary source is certainly worth exploring if it indeed offers the hope of increasing human understanding, and completing a theoretical Gestalt.

Summary

The development of the theory of Gestalt therapy and the
practice of its counseling approaches has not been
systematic since the death of Fritz Perls, and the role of
its counselors is still the subject of debate both within
the Gestalt community and within the universities. An
examination of the historical roots and development of the
theory of Gestalt therapy could make a valuable contribution
toward helping the profession move forward in a clearly
founded theoretical and systematic manner. Those who align
themselves with and conceptualize their clients using the
theory espoused by Perls may benefit from this body of work
as they strive to interpret the current needs facing their
clients as well as their own motivation for behavior.
Moreover, since the pioneer of the Gestalt therapy movement
has already died and others are rapidly approaching
retirement, it is of utmost importance that their rationale
in establishing an original theory and their experience and
contributions to the field of counseling be recorded and
recognized.

Procedures

Collection of Data

The libraries of the University of North Texas, the
University of Dallas, The Gestalt Institute of Cleveland,
and the author's private library have provided the bulk of
Perls' collection of publications for analysis. The Gestalt
Journal has provided information on gathering rare copies of
Perls' earliest writings. The Gestalt Journal also served
as a major reference for works describing the evolution and developments of the theory of Gestalt therapy. Dr. Dennis Engels of the University of North Texas Counselor Education department was consulted for proper methods of analysis of primary documents utilized in this historical inquiry.

**Interpretation of Data**

Primary source data included copies of unabridged original documents and publications that were authored by Fritz Perls or other early collaborators of Perls, including co-authors Laura Perls, Paul Goodman, and Ralph Hefferline. External criticism examining authenticity of these documents was conducted.

Hopkins (1980) suggested that external criticism was relatively simple when applied to documents in historical research. Hopkins defined external criticism in historical research as discerning the authenticity of the document; that is, answering the question of whether the document is genuine. External criticism is examined objectively by investigating the following: 1) date of publication, 2) publisher, and 3) Library of Congress catalog card number (Hopkins). If it is found that the above three items are indeed true than the document is said to exist; it is considered to be a genuine document. The question of whether the author of the document is indeed the genuine author, as well as the meaning attached to the publication
becomes a question to be answered through the investigation of internal criticism.

Internal criticism is concerned with the meaning of a document or relic (Hopkins, 1980). It is the meaning, not the document itself, that is under investigation. This dissertation did not make use of relics of the kind typically associated with archeological investigations, but rather specifically concerned itself with the published collection of the works of Fritz Perls. Because this dissertation did not deal with relics the necessity for discussion concerning data validation techniques, for example, carbon dating, was deemed unnecessary. Hopkins described the analysis of content in internal criticism as answering the following questions:

1. Did personal gain, interest, practical joke or other interest cause the creation of the object?
2. Did the report closely follow the event?
3. Does the information include anything that could not have been known at that time?
4. Has anything been lost in translation?
5. Is this evidence typical of the author and of the time period?
6. Do the meaning of the words have a different meaning now than they did when the author used them?

Given the above questions Hopkins argued that a rule of thumb in historical research is to accept information in
documents as fact whenever there is no reason to suspect inaccuracy or fraud.

The question of the meaning of the documents within this dissertation found as its form the scholarly interpretations of the researcher in reaction to the sources, and in combination with other diverse interpretations. This writer has read, listened to, or viewed all the documents in Perls collection of works, as well as read all views available, both in opposition to and in concurrence with the interpretations of this writer, in reference to the constructs described within the definition of terms section of this introduction.

**Reporting of Data**

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Intertwoven throughout each of the chapters are critiques of the constructs under investigation by both leading Gestalt therapists as presented either through their published works or through the interview process conducted by this researcher, and critiques written by leading theoreticians outside the theory of Gestalt therapy.

Following the introductory chapter, Chapter II has as its primary focus the intellectual and emotional development of Fritz Perls prior to his first publication. It includes an historical look at his education, his family of origin, and his psychological development, and examines those
persons he described as influential to his professional identification as a Freudian Psychoanalyst. An accurate understanding of his early professional associations and the establishment of Perls within the medical community provides the reader with some necessary background in order to understand the mindset of Perls prior to his rejection of Freudian Psychoanalysis and the development of his own theory of counseling, human development, and human behavior. Within this chapter the early thoughts of Perls that resulted in the development of the theory of Gestalt Therapy is presented. The chronological frame of reference discussed in the chapter is the period of time prior to Perls' publication of *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression*.

Chapter III describes the consolidation of Gestalt therapy. It focuses primarily on the degree of change in thought represented by the co-authored work of *Ego, Hunger and Aggression* and reports an analysis of Perls' theoretical constructs in relation to the early years in the development of the theory of Gestalt therapy. Focus is placed on the new concepts that set the foundation for further writings. Perls' major constructs are identified in this chapter in relation to those delineated in the Definition of Terms section of the introductory chapter.

Chapter IV examines the mature years of Gestalt therapy. This chapter focuses on the remainder of Perls' work, including his later books, articles, films, and cassettes.
Chapter IV discusses how the foundational constructs within the writing of *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression* find expression in Perls' other writings and publications. The chapter begins with Perls' 1951 publication and examines the theoretical constructs presented and amplified through the development of Perls' life, through his years at Esalen, to his final work. A sociological perspective is offered regarding the development of his thoughts within the Zeitgeist of his various publications. Chapter IV closes with a brief look at other major theories that offer concurrence with the major constructs Perls' outlined in his works.

Chapter V contains a discussion of the limitations of Gestalt therapy, limitations of this dissertation and a brief summary of this dissertation.

**Definition of Terms**

The following concepts are used in the historical analysis of the published works of Fritz Perls in an effort to establish a foundational baseline of his presented theoretical tenets. These constructs, viewed on a continuum are defined as follows (Spillman, 1986):

1. Determinism vs. Free Will. To what degree does individual freedom vary? To what extent does the individual possess a directing and controlling role in everyday behavior? To what extent is subjective freedom experienced
by the individual, and is this experience valid? The individual who is internally determined by self creation is said to possess free will. The individual who is internally determined by drives not of self creation, or externally determined by environmental stimuli is defined as determined.

2. Unconscious vs. Conscious. To what extent is behavior actually determined by factors partially or totally outside the sphere of the individual's conscious recognition? Unconscious is defined as unawareness while conscious is defined as awareness.

3. Monism vs. Dualism. Monism is defined as operating as mind or body without consideration of the other component. Dualism is defined as the body and mind working in some combination, the combination may differ according to the theorist. Dualism is not holism.

4. Physical vs. Mental. This concept relates to the concept of monism vs. dualism. It answers the question of which component the theorist views as dominant, mind or body or some combination thereof; or is the theorist holistic, thus rejecting this dichotomy?

5. Nativism vs. Environmentalism. How much of personality or behavior is inherited (nativism), and how much is a result of the individual's environment? How much of nature is fixed by genetics, and how much is a product of environmental influences?
6. Elementalism vs. Holism. Elementalism is synonymous with molecular and is defined as the extent to which specific fundamental aspects of the individual function independently. Holism is synonymous with molarity and is defined as understanding individuals in their totality, and an inability to understand the individual outside that totality.

7. Reactive vs. Proactive. This dichotomy is concerned with locus of control. Where is the cause or motivation of human behavior to be found? Do people generate behavior (proactive), or is behavior simply a series of reactions to external stimuli or internal drives?

8. Subjective vs. Objective. Is behavior influenced by the individual's subjective world of experience, or is behavior influenced primarily by objective factors such as drives? Is the individual explained from a phenomenological perspective or radical behavioral perspective?

9. Responsibility vs. Helplessness. Are individuals rational or irrational? To what degree do reasoning powers influence daily behavior? Are individuals directed by irrational forces, forces that are motivated out of the individual's awareness and thereby yielding individuals who are helpless; or, are individuals in control of their cognitive forces thereby responsible; or some combination of the above, which is defined as an interactionalistic perspective.
10. Thinking vs. Feeling. Is an individual primarily motivated by cognition, by affect, or by some combination of the two? The individual may also be defined as motivated by neither cognition nor affect but rather strictly by reactive behavior.

11. Heterostasis vs. Homeostasis. Is the individual fundamentally concerned with reducing tension and thereby reaching homeostasis or is motivation towards growth and self actualization? The construct of homeostasis includes the concepts of drives and instincts and purports that personality develops in order to reduce tension. Heterostasis includes the concepts of integration, self-actualization, striving, and growth towards fulfillment. These constructs, although described dichotomously, may be perceived from an interactionalistic perspective.
CHAPTER REFERENCES


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CHAPTER II

THE EARLY YEARS

Family of Origin

Fritz Perls was born in Berlin, Germany in 1883 to Jewish parents. He was the second of three children; and the only male child. During the years between 1883 and 1970 Perls was the primary originator of a new theory, Gestalt psychotherapy. Much of what led to his rejection of psychoanalysis and his creation of a new theory of therapy came from his personal experiences. These experiences are described in an autobiography titled In and out the garbage pail (Perls, 1969a). Upon reading In and out the garbage pail, one is struck by the seeming frankness and honesty with which Perls wrote about his life. He discussed behaviors and feelings that many would consider embarrassing or at least too personal to commit to print. As examples of the very private feelings and thoughts Perls wrote about, one may refer to the open and frank discussion regarding the disdain he felt towards his father and his sister, Elsie; the description of suicidal feelings repeated almost cyclically throughout his life; or the LSD trips he honestly admitted to.

Perls (1969a) began the discussion of his family by
pointing out how he was not properly nursed as an infant due to a nipple infection of his mother. As a result of improper nursing he was sickly and suffered from vomiting and diarrhea. This early memory of Perls is interesting with regard to his dental analogy, in light of the emphasis he placed on appropriate sucking and biting within infancy as the precursor behaviors for the development of aggression and the ego. Perls (1969a) claimed that he maintained a gaping yawn throughout adulthood due to this lack of sucking behavior.

Perls (1969a) described his very early years as happy years particularly due to the closeness he felt for his sister, Grete. Perls described a love for reading very early on, particularly in the home of his grandparents. He could not read at home because his father locked away books in his private bedroom, hence depriving the remainder of the family access. The early happiness Perls found in reading at his grandparents' home soon yielded to the unhappiness of the gymnasium. It was during this time that Perls earned the distinction of the black sheep of the family. During those days his relationship with Grete suffered because she was "very nervous, very talkative and very worried" (Perls, 1969a, p. 182).

Perls' mother played an important part in his desire to become prosperous and influential, yet she died before his fame. Perls described his mother as very ambitious for him...
and not the typical Jewish mother type. She was very interested in the arts, particularly music. She, unlike typical Jewish mothers of the time, gave Perls swimming lessons instead of encouraging him to read more. Perls disliked his eldest sister Elsie, who he said was a clinger, particularly to his mother. She had severe eye trouble, and he always felt uncomfortable in her presence. The motivation behind his feeling of uncomfortableness stemmed from Perls belief that he may some day be forced to care for Elsie. He described himself as a gypsy and the burden of Elsie did not fit his lifestyle. Elsie died in a concentration camp. Fritz said he did not mourn very much. He did not feel a great deal of guilt about his lack of mourning, but rather resentment, however, he acknowledged that "behind every feeling of guilt is resentment (Perls, 1969a, p. 182).

In 1896 Perls and his family moved from a Jewish ghetto to a fashionable part of Berlin. It was here that Fritz was regularly exposed to his Uncle Staub. Perls (1969a) was confused early in life about the acceptable roles of men. Perls had two primary male role models. One was his Uncle Staub who, as Germany's greatest legal theoretician, and financially very well off, was the pride of the family. Perls (1969a) reported feeling a very real attraction to Uncle Staub due to Staub's prominence within the community and his material wealth. Perls' confusion resulted from the
seemingly discordant fact that his Uncle Staub had been accused of seducing a thirteen year old girl. Uncle Staub had the persona of the respectable, righteous man while covertly engaging a young girl in sexual intercourse. This type of masculine behavior showed an obvious inconsistency in personal and public life.

The other influential adult male in Perls' youth was his father. As a young boy Perls described his father as a physically magnificent figure with a long beard, broad chest, and a particularly resonant voice that was enlivened during speaking engagements with the Freemasons (Perls, 1969a). Perls' father worked as a traveling salesman for Palestinian wines. He loved to drink and dance on holidays; however, this fond memory was inconsistent with Perls' general perception of his father. In reality his father was chief representative for the Rothchild Company; and as such was diligent in his work, serious, and unimpressed with his son. Perls (1969a) reported that he basically hated his father because of his emotional distance and of the explicit and implicit hate his mother felt for her husband. Perls said "she poisoned us children with her hatred of him" (Perls, 1969a, p. 201).

Ferdinand and Sexual Development

When Perls entered the gymnasium he was forced to accept the rigors of study. It was very difficult for him. The
sentiment in the gymnasium was discipline mixed with anti-Semitism. He had originally failed his entrance exam and as such went to a tutor who apparently appreciated his intelligence and encouraged him to reapply to the gymnasium. Perls (1969a) said he learned to lie quite successfully during his years in the gymnasium. At the same time that Perls was learning to lie at the gymnasium he was becoming unruly at home. During the seventh grade his grades deteriorated so severely that he was forced to repeat the grade and was dismissed from the school.

Another drop-out, Ferdinand Knopf, was Perls' initiator in sex. It was with Ferdinand that Perls engaged in masturbatory interludes while discussing Ferdinand's older sister. At age thirteen Perls engaged in sexual intercourse for the first time with a prostitute; however, it was traumatic for him because she pushed him off when he was unable to climax. He was further traumatized because his friend Ferdinand was watching the ordeal.

After being an apprentice for a soft goods merchant, Perls and his friend Ferdinand passed the entrance examinations and were accepted into a more liberal gymnasium. Perls (1969a) reported that he liked the school and identified with its humanistic orientation.

Perls' Psychological Perception of the Father Figure

During the years at the gymnasium Perls (1969a) reported
that his perception of his biological father was that of a poor man with limited ambitions and rather a leech. Perls decided that his father lacked public respectability. Perls deemed his father interpersonally stunted in his relationship with Perls' mother because he thoroughly dominated her life. An example of the domination was Perls (1969a) recollection of the many times his father would forget to give his mother money for food. The message Perls received from such forgetfulness was that his father wished to control the family in every way even to when and what the family ate.

As one of Perls' psychoanalysts, Wilhelm Reich offered Perls an interpretation of his early experiences with father figures. Reich suggested that Perls viewed men dichotomously. Reich concluded that Uncle Staub was Perls' psychological father and that Perls rejected his biological father. Reich said that Perls' father's masculinity was dissonant with his psychological identification as a male. Reich believed that Perls introjected the figure of Uncle Staub; that the figure of Uncle Staub was de-structured and assimilated into Perls permanent gender identity (Perls, 1969a).

Influential Women

Perls accepted Reich's interpretations with one major complication, the problem of the thirteen year old girl that
Uncle Staub had seduced. Lucy, the seduced girl, was a distant relative of Perls and lived near Perls as a young boy. She entered into his early ideas about sexuality, both before and after his Uncle's seduction of her.

Perls was conservative in his teenage years regarding sexual relationships. He participated in typical sexual explorations. He described love, first with a girl named Katy at the age of eight, later with a girl named Lottie Celinsky, and finally with Marty Fromm in Miami (Perls, 1969a). He described his relationship with Laura Perls, his wife, as not being a marriage of romantic love, but rather that of fellow travelers with a number of common interests. Perls (1969a) stated that he was not particularly attracted to Laura Perls physically and was not in love with her; instead he felt competitive with her and morally resentful of her attitude of self-righteousness, though he enjoyed her intellectual abilities.

It was Perls' relationship with Lucy that was most influential to his sexual development. He had seen her engaging in lesbian sex in his waiting room in Berlin, became very excited by it, and entered the room and joined in. It was with Lucy, the other girl and her husband, that Perls planned for his first homosexual interlude. Though he reported looking forward to the event with great delight, when the time came neither man could participate, leaving a relieved yet disappointed Perls. Perls continued his sexual
relationship with Lucy for many years, disregarding the fact that she was married and had children.

Perls recalled his teenage years with special attention to the sexual overtones. He stated that he did not take full responsibility for his sexual development (Perls, 1969a, p. 247). Sex was confusing for him. The dichotomy of mind and body was accentuated by his Jewish heritage. His parents described sex as bad, and believed that one who participated in sex, especially masturbation, was evil.

Perls' Bar Mitzvah

Perls' education during his adolescence was typical of that for other youth in Berlin during those years. His performance in elementary school was average until he reached the seventh grade. In 1906 Perls had his Bar Mitzvah. He described this period of time as puberty crisis and ascribed his concerns over his physiological changes to the fact that he failed the seventh grade (Perls, 1969a). He caused his parents great concern by being more interested in exploring his own thoughts and motivations of behavior than following their edicts regarding the development of a young Jewish man in the early 1900's in Germany. He described himself and his sister Grete as living in the streets, absorbing all that they could while his sister Elsie clung neurotically to their mother (Perls, 1969a).
Other Early Influences

An early influence upon Perls was his Jewish faith, of which he remained always respectful although he did not practice Judaism. Perls was a confirmed atheist who viewed religion as a societal projection. He believed religion was a way to avoid contact with oneself and thereby relinquish responsibility for behavior. Perls' early experiences in the gymnasium may have been the cause of later criticisms suggesting that his writings were anti-intellectual (Barlow, 1981). Perls learned early the value of acquiring an education; yet, because of early failures, he may have thought education to be a means to a vocational end, instead of learning for the sake of learning. Perls (1969a) favored experiencing the world first hand, rather than reading someone else's experiences with it, a predilection which continued throughout his life. For example, Wysong (1985) said Perls was more comfortable demonstrating the theory of Gestalt therapy than discussing the intellectual antecedents of the theory.

The Years in Frankfurt and the Influence of Gestalt Psychology

In 1926 Perls moved to Frankfurt to continue his analysis. Karen Horney, his analyst in Berlin, had sent him to Frankfurt to continue with Clara Happel. Perls (1969a) recalled the beauty and culture of Frankfurt as unspoiled
and comfortable. During that same year Perls became an assistant to Professor Kurt Goldstein at the Institute for Brain-injured Soldiers. Perls began to become familiar with Frankfurt society as a result of his participation in existential groups that afforded him social connections and professional relationships (Sherrill, 1986).

A major influence during Perls' early years in training was his introduction to Gestalt psychology. It was to be a primary source from which he historically moved into the development of Gestalt therapy. Gestalt psychology was developed by Wolfgang Köhler, Max Wertheimer, and Kurt Koffka, who were German perceptual psychologists. It is from Gestalt psychology that terms such as closure, wholeness, selective perception, and phenomenological thought emerged (Wysong 1985).

Perls credited Goldstein with his first exposure to Gestalt principles as applied to organismic functioning (Sherrill, 1986). "It was Kurt Goldstein who effectively debunked the absoluteness of the stimulus-response theory" (Perls, 1969a, p.39).

Gestalt psychology and Gestalt therapy are two separate entities within two separate disciplines. Academic Gestalt psychologists who have studied Gestalt therapy literature more often than not are unreceptive to the theory of Gestalt therapy (Barlow, 1981). The academic Gestalt psychologists claimed that the only descent from Gestalt psychology to
Gestalt therapy was associated with some simple classical Gestalt experiments in figure/ground information and figure/ground reversal. The academic Gestalt psychologists have stated that to relate the experiments to Perls' description of needs altering an organism's perceptions is as far as the similarity goes (Barlow, 1981). They note however, that the writings of Köhler, Koffka, Wertheimer and their students include applications of Gestalt psychology principles to personality functioning.

Gestalt psychologists have consistently denied any close kinship between their system of theory and the research and writings of Gestalt therapists. Köhler's widow wrote "I know that his attitude toward Gestalt psychotherapy was negative" (Sherrill, 1986). Kohler's colleagues Rudolph Arnheim and Mary Henle have been vehemently negative. Arnheim (1974) wrote: "I can see Max Wertheimer fly into one his magnificent rages, had he lived to see Perls' Ego, Hunger and Aggression dedicated to him as though he were the father of it all" (p. 570). Henle (1978) concluded her critique of Perls' writings by saying, "Fritz Perls has done his thing; whatever it is it is not Gestalt psychology" (Sherrill, 1986, p. 34).

Sherrill (1986) stated that Gestalt psychologists were not anxious to associate their theory with that of Perls because Perls made mistakes in interpretation and expression of the fundamentals of Gestalt psychology. Perls also
appeared to confuse Gestalt psychology with the systems of Lewin and Goldstein. An important theoretical difference between Gestalt therapy and Gestalt psychology is the degree to which organismic variables influence perception. Perls did not make mention of this fundamental difference anywhere in his collection of works.

Perls (1969a) stated explicitly that his study of Gestalt psychology was confined to some papers of Köhler, Wertheimer, and Lewin. His later works contained obvious errors in describing Gestalt psychology. For example, in one passage, Perls scolded Gestalt psychologists for concepts which they never endorsed:

(Our answer) comes from a direction which never claimed the status of a philosophy...Gestalt psychology...The formulation as expressed by the Gestaltists cannot possibly be correct. They say that the whole is more than the parts. In other words, something is added to the world simply by configuration. This would ruin our picture of the energy balance of the universe. Shall we then let the Gestaltists attribute to Gestalt formulation more power than our pious ancestors gave to God? (1969a, p.63)

Gestalt psychologists would recognize quickly the errors in this. Köhler (1922) discussed energy balance in detail, and insisted that all gestalten obeyed the physical laws of conservation of energy (p. 67). The notion that a Gestalt
is something which is added to a summation-of-parts was one portion of earlier theories of perception which the Gestaltists explicitly denied in their reformulation of what Gestalt meant. Köhler and his peers said that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Sherrill (1986) said that the quotation of Perls above showed Perls' lack of awareness that the Gestalt psychologists considered their ideas to be an approach to science which may contribute to diverse fields of study, including philosophical problems of ethics rather than a specialized school of psychology. For this reason they referred to themselves as Gestalt theorists.

Gestalt theorists have reacted both to Perls' errors in describing Gestalt theory as non-philosophical and to his tone of moral relativism (Henle, 1978). Perls' description of right and wrong as being always a matter of boundary, of "which side of the fence I am on" (Perls, 1969b p. 9) is alien to Köhler and Wertheimer's insistence that objective aspects of morality exist (Sherrill, 1986). Consequently Gestalt psychologists have attempted to disassociate their work from Gestalt therapy.

Lewin and Goldstein

Lewin and Goldstein both took aspects of Gestalt psychology and expanded the definitions of it, much of which Perls quoted in his writings (Henle, 1978). Yet, neither
Lewin nor Goldstein was a part of the core Gestalt theory group (Sherrill, 1986).

Lewin was a junior colleague of Köhler and Wertheimer at the University of Berlin in the 1920's. He had enormous respect for the Gestalt theorists, but became dissatisfied with their emphasis upon perception, and began designing experiments which would permit direct influence upon the dynamics of personality (Sherrill, 1986). According to Sherrill (1986) Edwin Newman believed that Köhler had a very high standard for himself and his students, in terms of precision of concepts and evidence. During the Berlin years there was almost a running battle between the students of Lewin and Köhler, and the latter disapproved strongly of some of the Lewinian theses. Lewin, who came to the United States in 1933, had named his theoretical system "topological psychology" (Lewin, 1935). It became apparent that Lewin's split from orthodox Gestalt psychology was complete (Marcus, 1980).

Goldstein had a great deal of contact with Köhler, Koffka, and Wertheimer in Germany. He greatly appreciated their work, and often used Gestalt terminology in his writings (Sherrill, 1986). According to Henle (1978) Goldstein considered himself more a holist than a Gestalt psychologist. Both Köhler and Wertheimer were disapproving of the expansion in thought that Goldstein applied to basic principles in Gestalt psychology. Goldstein, as a result of
disapproval, named his adaptation of Gestalt psychology "organismic biology" (Goldstein, 1939).

A Variety of Gestalt Interpretations of Figure/Ground

Examining the differences with which Lewin, Goldstein, Köhler, and Wertheimer defined the Gestalt concept of figure and ground may serve as an example of the variety of interpretations between the four men. For the Gestalt theorists, Gestalt was a generic term for all naturally occurring organized entities or functional wholes. A Gestalt could be a visual percept, a temporal pattern such as a melody or a dance, an organized memory trace, or a concept such as truth or democracy. A Gestalt is segregated from surrounding perceptual or cognitive activity by virtue of its internal organization and coherence. Figure/ground formation is a special Gestalt process. In addition to its internal organization as a Gestalt, a figure possesses a definite shape, a prominent contour, and the appearance of greater "thing-character" than the ground (Perls, 1950; Perls et al., 1951).

Wertheimer and Köhler used figure/ground terminology only for visual entities (Sherrill, 1986). Koffka was more inclusive, possibly because he attempted to write a comprehensive Gestalt description of mental functioning (Barlow, 1981). He considered it likely that the figure/ground distinction existed for all the senses, though
he believed that the quality of the ground could be described well only for audition; i.e., we can hear a speech on the background of the pattern of the rain (1935, pp. 220-221)

According to Sherrill (1986) there was only one instance in which a Gestalt theorist used figure/ground terminology to describe an internal event such as cognition. Duncker (1945) explained the process of restructuration in problem-solving; "Parts and elements of the situation which, psychologically speaking, are either hardly in existence or remained in the background-unthematically-suddenly emerge, become the main point, the then, the 'figure'" (p.29). Sherrill (1986) suggested that Duncker placed quotation marks around the word figure in an effort to distinguish it from its usual perceptual interpretation.

Lewin (1935) said that his use of the term figure was broad and implied that ground is a more active and more general process than the Gestalt theorists would have accepted: "the whole dynamic of sensory psychological process depends upon the ground and beyond it upon the structure of the whole surrounding field" (p. 40). This was an important expansion of the figure/ground concept in that the Gestalt theorists had paid little attention to the dynamics of the ground. Goldstein, on the other hand, paid a great deal of attention to both figure and ground. He explicitly extended figure/ground to cover all perception,
cognition, and emotion; "Any excitation in the nervous system has the character of a figure/ground character...Figure and background can be discriminated as readily in speaking, thinking, feeling, etc." (Goldstein, 1939, p.12-13). Such a definition is much broader than that of Köhler, Wertheimer and Koffka. It is also the definition that most closely aligns with that of Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman who stated:

in general a continuous sequence of grounds and figures, each ground emptying out and lending its energy to the forming figure that in turn becomes ground for a sharper figure; the whole process is an aware mounting excitement. Note that the energy for the figure-formation comes from both poles of the field, both the organism and the environment. (1951, p.470)

A Mistake of Perls

Perls erroneously grouped Lewin and Goldstein with Köhler and Wertheimer (Sherrill, 1986). In one article Perls named the three great Gestalt psychologists as "Köhler, Wertheimer, and Kurt Goldstein" (1943, p. 569). Consequently Gestalt psychologists have tended to view Perls with skepticism, and in some cases, contempt for his identification and association with their theoretical system.
Theoretical Differences Between
Gestalt Psychology and Gestalt Therapy

There are important theoretical differences between Gestalt psychology and the theory of Gestalt therapy. One such difference is the degree of influence of organismic variables such as needs upon perception. Gestalt psychologists stressed that figures emerge because of the objective properties of their internal organization (Koffka, 1935). They opposed earlier theories which described the contents of perception as a rather arbitrary result of the viewer's direct consciousness. Their emphasis upon the objective autonomy of Gestalten led them to ascribe relatively little importance to organismic energy, attention, or needs in perception, except as special-case factors (Sherrill, 1966). Koffka (1935) wrote that if the objective stimulus properties were weak, an attitude of active searching could cause an undifferentiated part of the field to coalesce into a figure (p.149). He described how extreme fatigue or boredom could cause a visual percept to lose good figure/ground articulation, and revert to a condition of uniformity (p.173).

With the exception of such special cases, Gestalt psychology theorists maintained that organismic needs rarely influence the actual formation of percepts. Rather, they asserted that needs cause certain already existing perceptual organizations to become endowed with qualities of
attraction or repulsion (Sherrill, 1986). They described these qualities as "demand character," a term that was picked up by both Lewin and Perls (Barlow, 1981). Koffka (1935) remarked that demand character might at times participate in the formation of a figure, but since there was no exact knowledge of the conditions under which this occurs, he played down this possibility.

Gestalt psychology theorists acknowledged that needs influence the organism's problem-solving behavior. Köhler and Wertheimer argued that stresses inherent in the structure of a problem cause corresponding stresses in the cognitions of the problem-solver (Barlow, 1981). Insight is a process of reorganizing one's cognitions to relieve this internal stress, and thereby to solve the problem (Sherrill, 1986). Köhler and Wertheimer added that intense organismic need-states often interfere with an accurate sensing of one's cognitive stresses resulting from a problem, and consequently interfere with the discovery of an elegant, correct solution (Sherrill, 1986). They acknowledged the role of intense needs in psychopathology. They were careful to describe both organismic needs and the organism's cognitions as gestalten, rather than as figures-on-grounds, since both are internal events.

**Perls' Use of Figure and Gestalt**

Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman (1951) used figure and
Gestalt almost interchangeably, and extended figure to include internal events: "The figure (Gestalt) in awareness is a clear, vivid perception, image, or insight..." (p. 231). Perls granted organismic needs a major role in the formation of figures, for example when he wrote about a walk through the woods and the figure of thirst: "suddenly in this undifferentiated general world something emerges as a Gestalt, as a foreground, namely, let's say, a well with water..." (1969b, p.15). In his use of figure/ground terminology Perls was far closer to Goldstein's concepts than to those of the Gestalt psychology theorists (Marcus, 1980).

Sherrill (1986) wrote that Gestalt therapy may more accurately find its foundation in the Gestalt tradition by remembering one of Simkin's favorite admonitions to stay with what is. What is, is that Gestalt therapy has expanded the meanings of important Gestalt terms, and blurred distinctions among concepts which Gestalt psychology theorists were careful to maintain. Most Gestalt therapists have used figure and Gestalt interchangeably, as well as broadened figure/ground to include internal events such as images and ideas. Sherrill (1986) maintained that Gestalt therapists have ignored the distinction between figure formation and selective attention, and that organismic states might have very different degrees of influence upon each. Given these changes, it is unlikely that traditional
Gestalt psychology theorists would accept Gestalt therapy as a direct descendant of their system. Barlow (1981) recommended that Gestalt therapists not try to assert such a close relationship. Gestalt therapists have made a value choice different from that of Gestalt psychology theorists, but similar to that made by Lewin and Goldstein. As Koffka's widow wrote:

The founders of the school were afraid of any 'premature' application of their ideas to their disciplines—'premature' meaning before the scientific groundwork had been firmly established. They may easily have been over-conscientious, for it limited the scope of their searchings and immediate influence. (Sherrill, 1986, p.59)

Gestalt therapists may have chosen to broaden concepts and to risk imprecision in the hope of better understanding the broader-scale functioning of persons.

Similarities Between Gestalt Psychology and Gestalt Therapy

Though Gestalt therapists acknowledge their differences with traditional Gestalt psychology theorists, they still assert them to be perhaps second-generation spiritual ancestors (Barlow, 1981). Gestalt therapists relate Gestalt therapy concepts not just to classic perceptual experiments on changing figure/ground organizations, but also, to what
the Gestalt psychology theorists said about personality functioning (Marcus, 1980).

Examples of Gestalt psychology addressing personality functioning include Koffka who devoted two chapters of his *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (1935) to the ego, adjusted behavior, attitudes and the will. Van Hornbostel's article, "The Unity of the Senses" (1927) described the interrelationships of perception, body, and spirit as an expression of (an) identity of process in the neural substratum. Schulte (1924) analyzed the development of a delusional relationship in paranoia. Although Wertheimer avoided the general study of motivation out of concern for subjectivistic misinterpretations, he described how anxiety or bodily needs created a psychological rigidity which interfered with a recognition of simple solutions to problems (Luchins, 1970, Vol. 2, p. 168; Vol 3, p. 60).

Finally, Köhler (1958) analyzed the intrapsychic dynamics of obsessions, and described how they could transform the cognitive field both in negative and in socially-productive ways.

An Association Between Lewin and Perls

Sherrill (1986) attempted to relate Gestalt therapy with its more immediate ancestors, the Gestalt-derived systems of Lewin and Goldstein. The two theories of Lewin and Perls seem to complement each other. Lewin wrote at length on the
internal dynamics of the subsystems of the psyche and on the structure of the psychological environment. He mentioned the organism/environment contact boundary, but only briefly. Perls and Goodman (1950), on the other hand, analyzed the dynamics and pathologies of the contact boundary in great detail, but spoke of the self as if it were relatively undifferentiated. Perls (1969a) described five layers of personality but mentioned little of how the layers interact with one another. Although there were differences in Lewin's and Perls' work there were also similarities. Some points of contact in Lewin's work for Gestalt therapy included:

1. a belief that an increase in a specific tension caused a high selectivity in perception.

2. the hypothesis that humans must often encapsulate tense psychological subsystems. Encapsulation permits one tension system to be discharged at a time; the resulting orderliness is necessary for biological survival. However, highly encapsulated subsystems could be pathological

3. how Lewin related the dynamics of internal structures to the ease with which the organism can concentrate voluntarily.

4. the way he detailed how the Self is a specialized sub-structure at the "core" of all the Gestalten which compose a human personality.
An Association Between Goldstein and Perls

According to Sherrill (1986) Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman (1951) borrowed several of Goldstein's concepts including those of organismic self-regulation and the dynamic of unfulfilled needs in the form of "pathological Gestalten" pushing into conscious awareness. Goldstein's writings contain many other concepts to which Gestalt therapy could be related. Perls apparently was not aware that his former mentor had written an article about organismically-based psychotherapy because if he had been aware of the article he would have no doubt made use of it (Sherrill, 1986). Some of Goldstein's concepts associated with Perls' theory included:

1. how he showed that any perceptual figure must be evaluated against a background of the whole organism.

2. how he described the way anxiety could de-center the organism and cause various phenomena of neurosis, such as compulsiveness.

3. the ways in which he explained that a psychotherapist must be a participant not just an observer, and must allow a state of "communion" to develop with the client.

4. how he compared this state of communion with Martin Buber's I-Thou experience.

An Association of Hefferline and Perls

Points of contact not only with historical theories but
also with contemporary experimental psychology will emerge as Gestalt therapy becomes more widely known (Wysong, 1985). According to Clark (1981) persons familiar with laboratory experimentation will experience directly in Gestalt therapy how their anxiety disrupted their perception and cognition, and will be challenged by the academic community to specify how their experiences in therapy related to the general study of perception. Hefferline was an example of such a person in his role as an experimental psychologist. His interest in Gestalt therapy led him to utilize self-paced "Informal Experiments in Self-Awareness" devised by Elliott Shapiro as experiential learning for his students. These self-experiments, and the students' discoveries from them, were incorporated into the book Gestalt Therapy (1951).

Hefferline (Perls et al., 1951) eventually came to believe that it was misleading to use the name "Gestalt" for his therapy; Hefferline felt that the two Gestalt movements shared little other than terms such as figure/ground (1962, p.124). However, he remained impressed with how an attitude of directed awareness could cause intense proprioceptive sensations to emerge suddenly from a part of the body of which the person had not been conscious for years. He believed that "the boundary between overt and covert behavior is one of particular vulnerability for psychopathology" (Hefferline, 1955, p. 376). His interest in how proprioceptions could be kept from reaching conscious
awareness led him into laboratory studies of electromyography in which he explored how muscle twitches below the level of awareness could be conditioned without the subject being aware of them (Hefferline, 1963, pp. 834-835). Hefferline moved into a different area than Gestalt therapy. Much of what Hefferline developed can be traced to current biofeedback use and research (Barlow, 1981).

Gestalt Therapy as a Continuation of Gestalt Psychology

As Gestalt therapy concepts are translated into a variety of experimental procedures, the concepts will be defined more exactly. This eventually will permit a new, more careful consideration of how Gestalt therapy might be a "good continuation of Gestalt theory, in its development of how perception is affected by the state of the whole organism" (Sherrill, 1986, p. 63). Even severe critics of Perls such as Henle and Arnheim stated that organismic needs were important in perception and cognition (Henle, 1955). They have objected to Gestalt therapy in part because clinical insights have not yet been confirmed through careful definition and study (Sherrill, 1986). Henle (1955) addressed the subject of needs by describing twelve possible effects of motivational processes upon cognition, and reviewing the experimental literature which supported each effect (pp. 423-432). Arnheim wrote that, for historical
reasons, the Gestalt psychology theorists concentrated upon
the more "objective" aspects of perception. He then added:

But {the Founders} would have been the first to agree
that in order to make any sense of perception you have
to embed it in the need structure of the organism and
indeed treat it as an outgrowth of those basic needs.
Otherwise, what sort of a Gestaltist are you?
(Sherrill, 1986, p. 64)

The confirmation and refinement of Gestalt therapy
concepts in the experimental laboratory is a task for the
future. For now, Gestalt therapists can acknowledge their
spiritual ancestry in Gestalt psychology, as well as their
differences with it. And they can say "thank you" to people
such a Simkin and Resnick, who have adapted ideas from the
Gestalt tradition in ways which have enriched psychotherapy.
Yet one must realize that there are other strong influences
that have been incorporated in the theory of Gestalt therapy
that require further attention, definition and explanation.

Basic Concepts

There are nine basic concepts delineated for the
purposes of this dissertation that require attention in an
effort to adequately understand Perls' use and disuse of
them. The concepts are identified as follows: 1) Gestalt,
the word itself, and its origin, 2) Holism, Smuts and
Gestalt psychology, 3) The Organism/Environment interaction.

The Word Gestalt

There are divergent and opposing opinions regarding the theoretical transition from Gestalt psychology to Gestalt therapy. These opinions range from Henle who wrote that "the two approaches have nothing in common" (Henle, 1978, p. 23); to Perls who was drawn to "the underlying holistic and phenomenological structure of Gestalt therapy as a clinical derivative of Gestalt psychology" (Yontef, 1979, p. 27). Barlow (1981) contended that the very fact that Perls called his method of therapy "Gestalt Therapy" indicated that he saw significant links and connections between the therapy and the tradition of Gestalt psychology. Perls regarded Gestalt therapy with its "dependence on the laws of Gestalt dynamics as the next step after Freud in the history of psychiatry" (Perls 1969a, p. 34). There is some dissension among Gestalt therapists regarding the theoretical influences of Gestalt psychology upon Perls. Enright (1975a) argued that Gestalt psychology was probably the least important theoretical influence on Perls, but was possibly used to name the new therapy because it was the most recent influence and "uppermost in Perls' mind" (Enright, 1975b p. 37).
Perls (1969a, 1973) noted that although he was an assistant to Kurt Goldstein and aware of the Gestalt psychologists' work in the 1920's he was primarily psychoanalytically oriented, both as a therapist/analyst and as a patient. It would seem significant that Perls did not use the word 'Gestalt' in any title nor in any significant manner when he wrote *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression* (1947). Rosenfeld commented that "there's not a lot in *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression* that points to the really extensive development that he made of the whole metaphor of Gestalt" (1978, p. 13).

Perls chose the title *Gestalt therapy: Excitement and growth in the human personality*, over strong objections from his wife Laura, and his co-authors Paul Goodman and Ralph Hefferline (Perls et al., 1951). Laura Perls argued that the approach as outlined in the book had little relation to the academic Gestalt psychology she had studied, and wanted to use the name "Existential Therapy". Goodman thought the title too esoteric, while Hefferline wanted their work presented as "Integrative Therapy" (Shepard, 1976). Enright (1975b) claimed that the name Gestalt therapy was an historical accident, and that it was misleading to attach too much weight to it in understanding Perls' works.

The "historical accident" theory is not upheld, however, by Perls' own work. Perls (1969b) described his relation to Gestalt psychologists as a peculiar one, but did not deny
that such a relationship existed. He credited his adoption of the fundamental idea of the unfinished situation, or incomplete gestalt, to Gestalt psychology (Perls, 1969b). He also stated his admiration for the work of the Gestalt psychologists, though disagreeing with their logical positivism.

Perls' feeling about his status as a "Gestaltist" is revealed in this quotation: "The academic Gestaltists of course, never accepted me. I certainly was not a pure Gestaltist" (Perls, 1969a, p. 62). Though Perls did not consider himself a pure "Gestaltist", gratitude for the contributions made by classical Gestalt psychology to Gestalt therapy was reflected both in his dedication of his first book to the memory of Max Wertheimer, and in this poem which he wrote:

Reality is nothing but
The sum of all the awareness
As you experience here and now
The ultimate of science thus appears
As Husserl's unit of phenomenon
And Ehrenfeld's discovery:
The irreducible phenomenon of all Awareness, the one he named
And we still call
GESTALT. (Perls, 1969a, p. 30)
Holism, Smuts and Gestalt Psychology

The basic premise on which Gestalt therapy rests is that of holism (Perls, 1973). The greatest value in the Gestalt approach, according to Perls, Hefferline and Goodman: "lies in the insight that the whole determines the parts, which contrasts with the previous assumption that the whole is merely the total sum of its elements" (1951, p. 19).

Latner stated: "The foundation of the first principle of Gestalt therapy is holism" (1973, p. 6). This basic premise was not only adopted by Gestalt psychology, but also by Gestalt therapy, and all of the humanistic and existential psychologies (Back, 1973). Perls had largely credited the Gestalt psychologists with the formulation of the concept of holism. Perls applied the concept of holism to his theory of personality and wrote that the concept was: "developed by a group of German psychologists working in the field of perception, who showed that man does not perceive things as unrelated isolates but organizes them in the perceptual process into meaningful wholes" (Perls, 1973, p. 2).

The term holism was first used in recent history by Smuts in 1906 however, he alluded to the construct as early as 1892-3. Smuts (1926) recognized that Eastern philosophy and religions had defined and used the concept of holism many centuries earlier.

Smuts formulated a number of basic concepts, the most important of which to Perls were the unity of the individual
and integration. Smuts wrote:

every individual form of life is a unity...it is this ultimate and internal unity that shapes the innumerable products of life into an orderly and harmonious whole...This distinct, single, indivisible unity of life in each individual I call the personality of that individual. (Smuts, 1895, p. 261)

This understanding of a human regarded the physical, the emotional, the thoughts, all mental events, as expressions of a unified being; of each individual. Holistically one cannot attain an adequate concept of the self by merely summing up the individual component parts of the self: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Gestalt therapy includes a philosophy of life based on the holistic epistemology outlined above. It is descriptive, integrative, and structural; emphasizing phenomenology, the here and now, and a positive wholeness that characterizes the responsibility people have in creating their lives and discovering their strengths.

The Organism-Environment Interaction

Gestalt therapy is concerned with interaction between the organism and its environment (Baumgardner, 1975). In the healthy organism, many needs are present at any one time. These organize themselves into a hierarchy of importance, as a natural process. The most dominant need
forms and becomes figure. In order to satisfy this need, the organism searches its environment for the desired object (sensory activity); when the object is found, the organism acts to assimilate it (motor activity).

The concept of the connection between the sensory and motor activities was extensively discussed by the Gestalt psychologists (Koffka, 1935; Hartmann, 1935). When the needed object has been assimilated, the Gestalt is closed, and a state of equilibrium is reached. The formerly dominant need recedes from awareness (becomes ground), and the energy thus freed is directed towards the next most dominant need. Organisms are thus self-regulatory or homeostatic (Smuts, 1926; Lewin, 1935; Goldstein, 1939; Latner, 1973; Perls, 1973). In this way, the organism is regarded as being "born with the capacity to cope with life" (Simkin, 1976, p. 17).

The Concept of Equilibrium

Many of the broad philosophical features of the Gestalt psychologists' work, such as the laws of pragnanz and closure, are related to the fundamental concept of equilibrium which runs through the whole of Gestalt therapy and Gestalt psychology. The perceptual field and its physical counterparts, the eyes, are dynamic wholes, which like a magnetic field of force in physics, tend towards equilibrium (Latner, 1986). When the psychological field is
disturbed by the introduction of new forces, the whole undergoes a new alignment of forces until equilibrium is once more established. In short, it is a fundamental property of percepts to tend towards stability, and to remain as stable as conditions permit. Perls stated:

Man seems to be born with a sense of social and psychological balance as acute as the sense of physical balance...difficulties spring not from the desire to reject such equilibrium, but from misguided movements aimed towards finding and maintaining it. (1973, p. 27.)

The Role of Attention, Awareness and Experience

Attention is important in Gestalt therapy because the therapist usually endeavors to facilitate the individual towards attending to behavioral processes or phenomena. Ternus (1926, p. 356) stated that attention "embraces the entire figure unless instructions to the contrary are given... and the centre of attention typically coincides with the figural centre of the presented object."

Attention, for Perls, was a deliberate way of listening or attending to the foreground (1969b). Fantz (1973) regarded perception as a function of the figure-ground relationship. A direct result of the focus of attention and activity is called the figure of Gestalt, and what does not become part of the focus remains background (Latner, 1973).
In this writer's opinion Perls would probably have concurred with Henle (1961, p. 163) when she stated that "attention intensifies the process which underlies the perception of an object."

The role of awareness in Gestalt therapy is somewhat obscure, although it is of fundamental importance. Polster and Polster (1974) described awareness or experience as one of the three touchstones of all Gestalt therapy, the other two being contact and experiment. Enright (1970, p. 108) described awareness as: "awareness is a state of consciousness that develops spontaneously when organismic attention becomes focused on some particular region of the organism-environment contact boundary at which an especially important and complex transaction is occurring."

A technique used in Gestalt therapy is the development of the continuum of awareness. It is the task of the therapist to facilitate the clients increasing self-awareness. Most people interrupt, block, or avoid awareness if it is unpleasant. As a result of the void of awareness individuals develop defense mechanisms such as intellectualization or flights into the past or future, anxiety, denial, deflection or other "coping" strategies. Kreuger (1928) had foreshadowed such techniques when he wrote that an emotional state tended to be dissipated by attention paid to it. When attention and awareness come
together there is an experience of the "now" (Baumgardner, 1975).

The greater the experience of the now, the more choices become available to the person. Baumgardner (1975) credited Perls (1947) with saying that the greater the awareness the greater the chance of tracing the process. This means that here is an afterimage that links up the past and the acquisition of experience.

This concept is firmly rooted in Gestalt psychology (Marcus, 1980). Gottschaldt (1926) wrote that past experience was an explanatory concept in that such experience constituted an independent force, capable of modifying subsequent perception in a specific manner; that is, past experience can modify present perception. Baumgardner (1975) concurred to a large degree, that tracing the history of the person's perception always provided the background part of the Gestalt.

The Here and Now.

Perls (1969b, p. 14) set out an equation of "now = experience = awareness = reality." The only awareness is here and now, whether it be the past (memories) or the future (anticipation); past and future events are in the present, as they occupy present processes. Naranjo (1970, p.66) contended that Gestalt therapy "aims at the sub-ordination [sic] of these thought forms to life."
Perls (1969b) insisted that to stray from the present distracted from the living quality of reality. This emphasis on the "now" is consistent with the Gestalt psychologists' definition of psychology as the study of the immediate experience of the whole organism, the "now" as it is perceived (Marx & Hillix, 1973). Asch in writing a brief outline of Gestalt psychology said that it "assigns a place of crucial importance in psychological inquiry to the data of immediate experience" (1970, p. 248).

Murphy & Jensen (1932) set out the Gestalt psychologists' position with regard to personality and present immediate experience, a position endorsed by Perls: "Just as the parts fail to explain the whole, so the past fails to explain the present or the present the future...at the present instant the future seems simply non-existent" (Murphy & Jensen, 1932, p. 24).

The Concept of Boundaries and Neurosis

Hartmann (1935) referred to the work of Rubin who discussed the role of contours and boundaries between figure and ground. Koffka (1935) went further and distinguished between the self and others. Köhler (1922) referred to the process whereby the environment meets the self. Every part of the organism is said to be constantly influenced both by the outside world and by other parts within. Köhler's concept of boundaries asserted: "the inner states of any
finite system develop relative to more or less fixed conditions along its boundaries and its interior" (Köhler, 1922, p. 65). The state of any region of the system at any particular time is determined by the state of every other region. This principle constitutes the fundamental thought underlying the theory of Gestalten. Gestalt therapy reiterates this principle when it states that neuroses occur at the boundary (Perls et al., 1951). Perls incorporated this concept of 'boundary', and amplified it through many of his works (Perls et al., 1951; Perls, 1969b; 1973).

The study of the way in which a person functions in his environment is the study of what goes on at the contact boundary between the individual and his environment. It is at this contact boundary that the psychological events take place. Our thoughts, our actions, our behavior, and our emotions are our way of experiencing and meeting those boundary events. (Perls, 1973, p. 17)

Perls did not make a clear distinction between the contact boundary and ego-boundary, which is the differentiation between the self and otherness. However, this concept of Koffka's has been largely incorporated, as shown by Perls' description of the identification and alienation functions of the ego-boundary (Sherrill, 1986). Inside the ego-boundary there is a cohesion, and cooperation, while outside the ego boundary is suspicion and strangeness (Perls, 1969b).
Perls defined neuroses as disturbances of the contact boundary: "All neurotic disturbances arise from the individual's inability to find and maintain a proper balance between himself and the rest of the world" (Perls, 1973, p. 31).

In the healthy individual, the process of Gestalt formation and recession flows smoothly. If Gestalten are not adequately fulfilled, blocked energy results in anxiety. Perls (1973) interpreted Goldstein's view of anxiety as implying that anxiety is the result of catastrophic expectations which can lead to detachment and isolation of organismic parts, or in other words, a splitting of the personality (Sherrill, 1986). Baumgardner (1975) believed that the presence of anxiety indicated that the individual left the present for a journey into fantasy or the future. Anxiety was regarded as a substitute emotion which blocked awareness of the reality of the moment (Baumgardner, 1975). This view was not only held by Baumgardner (1975) but by other Gestalt therapists who reiterated Goldstein's (1939) description of the manner in which neurosis can result from anxiety (Sherrill, 1986).

The Mind-Body Position

Perls adopted a holistic doctrine that stated that humans are unified organisms. This was a different position from the pervasive psychiatric thought of the time which was
still operating in terms of the old mind-body split" (Perls, 1973, p. 9). Wertheimer in discussing the mind-body split stated: "The principle here, is that something mental is meaningfully coupled with something physical" (Wertheimer, 1925, p. 8). Thus, to observe the physical is to infer the mental. Wertheimer (1925) further explained how various physical processes are often "Gestalt identical" with mental processes.

Gestalt psychologists formulated the law of "psycho-physical isomorphism" which began from the dualism of mind and body (Sherrill, 1986). Henle explained this concept and stated "that molar events in experience are structurally identical to the corresponding molar physiological events in the brain" (1978, p. 25). This is, in fact, a dualist position.

Perls' position regarding the body-mind debate is not entirely clear. A monist position was espoused in some places when he maintained that humans do not have a body but rather: "we are a body, we are somebody" (Perls, 1969b, p. 6). In Ego, Hunger, and Aggression, he stated that "body and soul are identical 'in re' though not 'in verbo' the words 'body' and 'soul' denoted two aspects of the same thing" (Perls, 1947, p. 33). Perls (1947) elaborated and said that dualistic and parallelistic theories are based on an artificial split which has no existence in reality. Although Perls considered himself a monist, a number of
extracts from his writings suggest that he was not entirely a monist, but rather an uncertain dualist because he referred (1947, p. 110) to "purely mental experiences" which comprise "wishes, phantasies and daydreams", hardly the words of a pure monist (1947, p. 110).

The position Perls accepted was not dissimilar to that of Wertheimer (1925) who stated that when people are timid, afraid or energetic, happy or sad, it can be shown that the course of their physical processes are Gestalt identical with the course pursued by their mental processes (Sherrill, 1986). In this writer's opinion such statements influenced Perls when he introduced "the concept of the unified field" which stated that in psychotherapy, what a person does gives the therapist clues as to what the person thinks (Perls, 1973, p. 12). Gobar in referring to psychotherapy stated that "the concept of 'psychological equilibrium' is analogous to the concepts of 'physical equilibrium' and 'physiological equilibrium' (1968, p. 254). If Gobar was using the word "analogous" in the same way that Websters New Collegiate Dictionary (1977) defined its meaning, that is "equality, homology" or "equivalency" then the respective positions of Gestalt psychologists' and that of Perls with regards to the mind-body issue may be seen as somewhat confused.

Henle (1961) reported the Gestalt psychologists' belief that expressive behavior reveals its meaning directly in
personality. This approach adopted by Perls, (1947, 1969a) was based on the "principle of isomorphism" (Henle, 1961, p. 308), whereby processes in one medium are similar in their structural identity to those in a different medium. This means that mental processes have bodily counter expressions: "if the forces which determine bodily behavior are structurally similar to those which characterize the corresponding mental states, it may become understandable why physical meaning can be read off directly from a person's appearance and conduct" (Henle, 1961, p. 308).

Henle's view is compatible with the views expressed by Perls (1947, 1973) when she wrote: "The way a person dresses, keeps his room, handles the language...can be called expressive in that they permit conclusions about the personality or the temporary state of mind of the individual" (Henle, 1961, p. 302).

Köhler insisted strenuously on a "special type of parallelism" when he wrote:

When someone experiences that flash by which a new idea or the solution of a problem comes to him, he will suddenly interrupt his walking or abruptly strike his head. Here both his inner experience and his outer aspect will exhibit the same interruption of continuity. (Köhler, 1922, p. 69)

Henle's conclusions of dualism are somewhat questionable when tempered with historically relevant material such as
Hartmann's (1935) book *Gestalt Psychology*. Hartmann stated that: "the monism of Gestalt is implied" when it is asserted that the psychological and the physical are "one and the same reality and are expressed in two different conceptual systems" (Hartmann, 1935, p. 71). It is a Zen notion that mind and body are not one nor two, but between one and two. Gestalt psychology equated bodily events with mental events since the same configuration is found in both. This concept is one of the most important in Gestalt therapy. The therapist can only be in touch with a client by various extrapolations and interpretations of physical processes from mental material (Barlow, 1981). The total organism is not to be analyzed into parts. Perls stated: "We believe further that the 'mental-physical' or 'mind-body' split is a totally artificial one, and that to concentrate on either term in the dichotomy is to preserve neurosis, not to cure it" (Perls, 1973, p. 53).

This line of thought represents another direct influence of Goldstein on Perls (Sherrill, 1986). Goldstein claimed that loss of categorical thinking or an inability to abstract and classify results in a lack of accurate self-awareness and of action. Perls (1947, 1968a, 1968c, 1969a, 1969b, 1973) emphasized the importance of using words which express the precise meaning. Pathology produces distortion of word meanings, incorrect vocabulary, wrong application of grammar, and incorrect syntax (Perls, 1947).
Perls (1947) encouraged people to learn the value of each word, and to appreciate the power hidden in the logos. Perls (1947) concluded that the avoidance of ego language, the use of the "I", and the avoidance of personal responsibility are closely related. Language, the ability to use abstract thinking, and mental health are then interconnected and the understanding of their interconnectedness is essential to the understanding of Gestalt therapy (Barlow, 1981).

Psychotherapy and Integration

Gobar (1968) is one of the few authors who have discussed the role and purpose of psychotherapy in Gestalt psychology. He maintained that all psychological disorders involve the destruction of a basic psychological structure and a concomitant generation of a "bad configuration". This results in a pervasive disturbance of the equilibrium of the psychological makeup as a whole.

It is important to examine and analyze successful therapeutic interventions. Perls (1973) asserted that successful therapy "frees the patient's ability to abstract and integrate... his/her abstractions" (p. 103). The long-term goal of therapy "must be to give him the means with which he can solve his present problems and any that may arise tomorrow or next year" (Perls, 1973, p. 63).

If successful therapy integrates the personality (Perls,
1973), then the approach described by Gobar (1968) has much in common with that of Perls. According to Gobar, the concept of "cure" in psychotherapy can be seen as "the process of the reconstruction of the psychological system and the resultant restoration of equilibrium" (Gobar, 1968, p. 128).

For Gobar (1968) the principle of equilibrium holds for all psychological processes including the perceptual and cognitive at all genetic levels. In addition, it also "constitutes the explanatory principle for the fundamental process of adaptation of the organism-environment" (Gobar, 1968, p. 147). Gobar (1968) defined the term "organism-environment" as the contact boundary between the individual (organism) and that which is outside the individual (environment). This term is used by Perls (1947) to describe the integration of the contact boundary within the ego boundary of the individual.

Goldstein is quoted as describing the process of integration in this way:

All a persons' capacities are always in action in each of his activities. The capacity that is particularly important for the task is in the foreground; the others are in the background. All of these capacities are organized in a way which facilitates the self-realization of the total organism in the particular situation. For each performance there is a definite
figure-ground organization of capacities. (Polster & Polster, 1974, p. 66)

One of the therapeutic tools that Perls (1969a, 1973) adopted when patients would not remember their dreams, and thus not choose to integrate it into their ego boundary, was to request that each person fantasize as to what the dream would be if they could remember it, a method which some regarded as free association (Perls et al., 1951). Hartmann stated that: "Wertheimer actually won some repute as an authority on the diagnostic or detective use of the free association method" (1935, p. 65). The goal was to bring the information into the patient's awarenesses and from their perception de-structure, assimilate and integrate the material.

Perls adopted a position on awareness similar to that espoused by various writers of Gestalt psychology such as Hartmann (1935). Perls (1969a) gave the therapeutic community clear insight into the nature of cure in psychotherapy when he stated that awareness, of and by itself, can be and is curative. Hartmann wrote that "an emotional state tends to be dissipated by attention to it as such" (1935, p. 83). Kreuger also added to this concept of cure:

An emotional complex loses in its intensity and plasticity of its emotional character to the degree that it becomes analyzed, so that its parts become relatively
separated, or that the partial moments in it come out clearly as such. (Kreuger, 1928, p. 62)

Once again the constructs of early Gestalt psychologists and the writings of Perls appear similar although Gestalt psychology is not the sole or major influence found in the writings of Perls. One must also be cognizant of the psychoanalytic influence to which much of Perls' collection of works was in response.

Perls had three goals in mind in his proposed revision of psychoanalysis: (a) to "replace the psychological by an organismic concept", (b) to "replace association-psychology by gestalt-psychology", (c) to "apply differential thinking based on S.F. Friedlander's 'Creative Indifference'" (1947, pp. 13-14). Items (b) and (c) in particular involve theoretical foundations for a variety of Gestalt techniques (Marcus, 1980).

Chapter III of this dissertation begins with the particular influences of psychoanalysis in the developmental thoughts of Perls. These thoughts were expressed in Perls (1947) Ego, Hunger, and Aggression, which was written in response to what Perls' believed to be faults and inconsistencies of psychoanalysis.


Milbrae, CA: Celestial Arts.


CHAPTER III

THE CONSOLIDATION OF GESTALT THERAPY

Introduction to the Psychoanalytic Influence

In reading and viewing the collection of Perls', work one finds a consistent use of psychoanalytic terminology as well as writings predominantly addressing or redressing psychoanalysis as it pertains to Gestalt Therapy (Laborde, 1979). Psychoanalysis had a profound effect upon the development of the theory of Gestalt Therapy and was also a predominant influence on the thinking of Perls as a theorist, practitioner, and patient of psychotherapy (Laborde, 1979). As a result of this influence a comparison of the two theories is appropriate to identify similarities and differences that resulted in dissonant views of human nature and the practice of psychotherapy.

Awareness versus Consciousness

Perls placed a great emphasis upon accurate self-awareness. Accurate self-awareness is the ability to sense ones needs without repression; that is, to allow each need to become figure as it arises. Perls used "awareness" and "non-awareness" in much the same way that Freud used "conscious" and "unconscious", although Perls' "awareness"
may have more emphasis on concentration than Freud's "conscious." Perls insisted that one concentrate on or look at one's own awareness. He believed that a person's dominant needs pushed for awareness, determined gestalts, and then selected from the environment what related to those needs. By staying with moment-to-moment awareness, the organism, using perception patterns, can determine its dominant needs. Even more often, awareness focuses on the organism's old habits which are not fulfilling its needs. Seeing the failures of one's habits and focusing on what one really needs can lead to fulfilling the organism's dominant needs.

Differences between Perls and Freud

Perls disagreed with Freud in other significant areas; however, it is clear that Perls' work grew out of Freud's paradigm (Laborde, 1979).

Perls disagreed with Freud's division of the mental apparatus into Ego, Id, and Superego. Perls thought it more constructive to consider a single ego, self, or personality which functioned in particular ways. Perls (1947, 1948, 1953, 1973) argued that mental constructs of divisions inside the personality encouraged splits in the personality.

Perls, who considered the Ego to be a function and a symbol, disagreed with the widely accepted psychoanalytic belief that the ego was a substance. It should be noted that Perls did not accuse Freud of holding this theory.
Perls (1947) in writing about the Ego, said:

The Ego's meaning is that of a symbol and not of a substance. As the Ego indicates the acceptance of and identification with certain parts of the personality, we can make use of the Ego-language for the purpose of assimilating disowned parts of ourselves. These disowned parts are either repressed or projected. The "It" language is a mild form of projection and results, like any other projection, in a change from an active to a passive attitude, from responsibility into fatalism.

(1947, p. 218)

Here Perls noted the power of language in constructing our reality and our personality as an example of the crucial effect of symbols on our experience.

Perls believed that Freud's concept of the ego made it a servant instead of a master. He wrote:

In other words, by taking the Ego as a substance we have to admit its incompetence. We have to accept the Ego's dependency upon the demands of instincts, conscience, and environment, and we have to agree fully with Freud's poor view of the Ego's power. (1947, p. 147)

Perls, instead, viewed the ego as potentially powerful and potentially the master of its situation as a result of its ability to identify, to attract toward itself and take in whatever the Ego considered "right".

As for Freud's Superego, Perls took exception to the
concept several times and from several vantage points. Perls distinguished between self-actualization, which he saw as a good and natural development of the organism, and self-concept or self-image actualization, which he saw as destructive. Perls wrote:

It took me still some more years to understand the nature of self-actualization in terms of Gertrude Stein's "A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose." The self-concept actualization is there, for instance, with Freud under the name of ego-ideal. However, Freud used the terms superego and ego-ideal interchangeably like sleight of hand. They are absolutely different phenomena. The superego is the moralistic, controlling function which could be called an ideal only by a 100% submission-desiring ego. Freud just never made it the point of understanding the self. (1969a, p. 5)

Perls voiced one of his dissatisfactions with Freud's concept of the superego as an agency, and the conscience as a function of that agency, when he wrote:

Then Freud came and he showed that the conscience is nothing but a fantasy, an introjection, a continuation of what he believed was the parents. I believe it's a projection onto the parents, but never mind. Some think it is an introjection, an institution called the superego, that wants to take over control. Now if this were so, then how come the analysis of the superego is
not successful? How come that when we tell ourselves to be good or to do this or that, we are not successful?

(1969b, 218)

Perls thought of the instincts as biological "needs" which directed the organism's perception so that the personality could find the fulfillment of these needs in its environment. Fulfillment of these needs leads the personality toward maturity and developmental growth. Interruption of fulfillment of the needs of the organism, of the maturation of the "biological self," occurs when the ideal self superimposes its beliefs onto this natural process (Yontef, 1979). The conflict between the natural self and ideal self is a primary cause of neuroses (M. Ward, personal communication, October 13, 1988).

D.H. Lawrence introduced the concept of an "individual nature" which is spontaneously created by one's unconscious and posited its conflict with the "ideal nature" (1968, pp. 15, 16). He said that neglecting to mention the sources of one's ideas may be one of the hallmarks of a great man (Lawrence, 1968, p. 16). Perls presented these borrowed ideas in enough details and with few enough changes so that it is possible to relate them back to their originator (Laborde, 1979). Perls' talent lay in brilliantly utilizing these ideas in the therapeutic process (M. Ward, personal communication, October 13, 1988).
Perls' Present versus Freud's Past

Perls thought that psychoanalysis encouraged deadness and suppression of emotion in two particular ways. The first by focusing on the past and the causes of the patient's problem, and the second by encouraging the patients to live in the middle zone of experience, what Perls called the DMZ. Perls wrote: "The great error in psychoanalysis is in assuming that memory is reality" (1969b, p. 46). Perls thought that a patient's memories were unreliable and unhelpful in bringing about change in the present. Instead of looking to the past for explanations, Perls would have his clients look at the "now" and "how". He wrote: "If you ask how, you look at the structure, you see what's going on now, a deeper understanding of the process. The how is all we need to understand how we or the world functions" (1969b, p. 47).

Perls believed that psychoanalysis encouraged its advocates to spend most of their time in the past. He described the DMZ by writing that:

Our world consists of three spheres. You understand this is very schematic. The self zone, inner zone, which is essentially, let's call it, the biological animal. The outer zone, the world around us, and between the outer and the inner zone, there is a DMZ, a demilitarized zone, essentially discovered by Freud.
under the name of complex. In other words, in this
middle zone there is a fantasy life of the conscious,
called "mind", which is full of catastrophic
expectations, full of fantasies, full of computer
activity-verbiage, programs, plans, thoughts,
constructions. This intermediate zone takes up all the
energy, all the excitement, so that very little is free
to be in touch with yourself or the world. Freud had the
right idea of emptying out this middle zone, but in
practice in psychoanalysis you stay in the middle
zone. You are not allowed to touch, to go out, to
discover yourself in the whole range of physical
experience, in being in touch with the world. (1969b,
p. 135)
Perls concluded from his work with neurotic "normals" that
most people in our culture were living in the middle zone of
experience.

Opinions on Anxiety

Perls had two other points of disagreement with Freud
which are pertinent here. First, Perls disagreed with Freud
about the source of anxiety. Perls wrote: "Anxiety is the
tension between the now and the later" (1969a, p. 174).
Freud, on the other hand, viewed the superego as the source
of anxiety. The distinction between doing something bad and
wishing to do it disappears entirely, according to Freud,
when the outside admonitions become a part of the mental apparatus of the child in the form of the superego (Freud, 1936). Freud (1936) also pointed out that the superego has no reason to punish the ego for "bad" wishes, yet is conditioned to do so, and if it continues anxiety is the result. This may be one of the sources of anxiety. There may be other sources as well.

It is conceivable that the emotion of anxiety could be confused with excitement, since there is sometimes an overlap in the two feelings; or, both terms might be confused with excitation, a term used by Freud (1936). A close look at the three terms as used by Freud and by Perls may make the difference clear.

Anxiety is a state of uneasiness, apprehension, and/or worry. Excitement is stimulation, activity, and/or increased energy. Perls viewed anxiety as excitement without an immediate discharge into action. The distance between thought now and action later caused anxiety. According to Perls (1947), anxiety, in most cases, is to be avoided and excitement is to be courted. Excitement is the life force manifesting itself. When we block this with fear, then anxiety results.

Perls' use of the word "excitement" differed from Freud's use of a similar word, "excitation", in the following manner. In Freud's (1920) terminology, the quality of excitation determined pleasure or pain. Pain was
an increase in excitation and pleasure was a decrease. Freud's principle of constancy and his pleasure principle grew from this concept of pain and pleasure as proceeding from excitation. The organism attempts to reduce pain and to gain pleasure by decreasing excitation (Freud, 1920). Perls' writings contain a principle similar to Freud's principle of constancy, which Perls called homeostasis (Perls, 1973).

The Concept of Homeostasis

W.B. Cannon originated the ideal of homeostasis in *The Wisdom of the Body*. The homeostatic process is the process by which the organism maintains its equilibrium and satisfies its needs (Perls, 1973). The principle of constancy is the tendency toward stability (Perls, 1973). Excitation is the response of the organism to the principle of constancy, while excitement is the response of the organism to the principle of homeostasis. Freud (1920) saw the healthy organism as wishing to decrease excitation in order to feel pleasure, while Perls (1973) saw the functioning organism as marshaling excitement into action in order to satisfy its needs, which is pleasurable. Thus, anxiety, excitement, and excitation, while showing some relationship as feeling states, are used to denote different experiences in the writings of Perls and Freud.
Summary

Perls disliked Freud's division of the mental apparatus into the Ego, Id, and Superego. Perls thought that one Ego was a healthier way to view the psychical organization. Perls (1947) replaced Freud's posited instincts of the Id with the principles of attraction and repulsion. Perls (1947) believed that humans need to expand their Egos to take in whatever they are attracted to, and that they either keep out what is repulsive or they deaden their awarenesses that it has become a part of their Ego. In Perls' (1969a) lexicon, conflicts were usually between top dog and under dog or between two opposing rules which have been introjected. These conflicts could be resolved by heightening awareness which might eliminate the conflicts, the deadness, and any need for looking backward as psychoanalysis demanded. Perls (1947, Perls et al. 1951, Perls, 1969a, 1969b, 1973) often repeated the essential healthy and healing power of living in awareness of the self in the present and that therapy that stressed the past or the future was futile without this recognition. Life is to be lived, not talked about. According to Perls (1947) it does not matter why one chooses to hate one's mother, but what matters is how one feels now about it and the general association of one's mate who represents current close relationships. What is going on now? What do you want? These questions were often asked by Perls (1969b) to restore
communication with the natural self, which Perls felt would lead toward maturation, satisfaction, and self-support.

**Ego, Hunger, and Aggression**

There is no doubt that much of Perls' work involved a rebuttal or redress of the principles of human behavior that Freud set forth. The works of Freud predated and opened the doors for the development of the theory of Gestalt Therapy as a reaction to psychoanalysis (Laborde, 1979). Perls was not only trained as an analyst but worked for years in establishing and leading the psychoanalytic institute in South Africa. As mentioned before, in his book *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression* he never referred to the theory as the theory of Gestalt Therapy. The book established the original ideas of the theory (Kogan, 1974).

Perls chose to write the book with a great deal of attention to the classical psychoanalysis and the Gestalt psychology theorists. *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression* dedication to Max Wertheimer should be recognized as somewhat controversial. Perls' intention when he wrote *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression* was to continue the development in thought of psychoanalysis (Kogan, 1974). He began his book by quoting Freud: "Psycho-analysis is founded securely upon the observations of the facts of mental life; and for that reason its superstructure is still incomplete and subject to constant alteration" (Perls, 1947, p. 7). *Ego, Hunger, and
Aggression was considered by Perls to be a continuation of the psychoanalytic outlook. Perls said the aim of the book was "to examine some psychological and psychopathological reactions of the human organism within its environment" (Perls, 1947, p. 7).

It is within *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression* that Perls concentrated on presenting his ideas that have grown from his psychoanalytic roots (Kogan, 1974). The book itself is difficult to read, particularly the first chapter. "The first chapter, though not easy to read, is important" (Perls, 1947, p. 6). *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression* became the book of transition from classical psychoanalysis to the Gestalt approach (Kogan, 1974). The book itself is divided into three parts: 1) Holism and Psychoanalysis; 2) Mental Metabolism; and 3) Concentration-Therapy.

**Holism and Psychoanalysis**

One primary intent of part one of *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression* was Perls' desire to redress classical psychoanalysis. Perls wrote: "In this revision of psycho-analysis I intend: (a) To replace the psychological by an organismic concept; (b) To replace association-psychology by gestalt-psychology; and (c) To apply differential thinking, based upon S. Friedlaender's 'Creative Indifference'" (1947, p. 12).

Perls began this section by discussing what seems to be
a phenomenological perspective. He wrote: "We have, however, now come to appreciate that everybody's observations are dictated by specific interests, by preconceived ideas and by an often unconscious attitude which collects and selects facts accordingly" (Perls, 1947, p. 14). Perls, in further discussion stated, "There is no such thing as objective science, and as every writer has some subjective viewpoint, every book must depend upon the mentality of the writer" (Perls, 1947, p. 14).

Friedlaender's concept of the zero point, from which a differentiation into opposites takes place, was a major facet of this section. The concept of the zero point became a central issue for Perls in describing needs, wants, the organism/environment, contact, resistances, and psychopathology. The concept of the zero point is analogous to Freud's pleasure principle in that Freud discussed pleasure as a lessening of tension, or a reduction of pain (Kogan, 1974). It is this return to the center, this homeostatic balance, from which Perls conceptualized normalcy and human nature and the motivation for behavior.

Perls discussed this balance of the zero point in almost pure psychoanalytic terminonology when he wrote: "Any disturbance of this balance is experienced as painful, the return to it as pleasant" (Perls, 1947, p. 16).
Differential Thinking

Perls labeled the above conceptualization as "differential thinking." Differential thinking is composed of three elements: 1) opposites; 2) pre-difference or the zero point; and 3) degree of differentiation. These elements set the stage from which Perls played out the theoretical tenets of his emerging theory of human behavior. Perls stated, "Thinking in opposites is the quintessence of dialectics" (Perls, 1947, p. 17). It is from this concept that Perls concluded that humans are field theoretical in that he believed that individuals can become aware of their own differential thinking into opposites, and an awareness that they possess a unique view of themselves in relation to their environment. The environment, the situation, becomes the field from which one differentiates. One moves from the pre-different stage of thinking, the stage of undifferential thinking, to differential thinking. The concept of differential thinking encompasses Friedlaender's concept of creative indifference. Creative indifference is not apathetic thinking, but rather an inspired interest for both sides of the continuum of a particular issue; it is "full of interest, extending towards both sides of the differentiation" (Perls, 1947, p. 17). It has an aspect of balance but is not to be interpreted as the absolute zero point. People may grow into highly differentiated individuals, they may choose to remain where they are, or
they may choose to regress. It is the development of ego-functions that allows persons to choose to either encounter life or to regress to a more primitive level of psychological functioning.

The individual bent on differential thinking begins to channel energy and in so doing influence the nature of his or her being within the natural flux of time and space (Perls, 1947). It is through this channeling of energy the individual begins to destructure his or her environment and assimilate those aspects which are congruent with the self. The person destructures, never annihilates for "real annihilation is never possible" (Perls, 1947, p. 23).

One must decipher how thinking may apply to the concept of differential thinking. Thinking to Perls (1947) meant any number of mental activities. For example, remembering, planning, subvocal talking, and imagining, all of which may be defined more precisely through identification with their opposites.

Holism and Smuts

Perls (1947) credited J.C. Smuts with coining the term "holism" and accepted his definition of the term. Perls defined holism as:

the term coined by Field-Marshel Smuts

for an attitude which realizes that the world consists 'per se' not only of atoms, but of structures which have
a meaning different from the sum of their parts... The difference between the isolationist and the holistic outlook is about the same as between a freckled and a sun-tanned skin. (Perls, 1947, p. 29)

Perls claimed that the organism could only be understood with any sense of accuracy when perceived holistically within a specific field.

Perls took the concept of holism and extended it to the issue of the body and soul. Perls was an atheist who appeared to be consistent in his view that a body/soul dichotomcy was not only impossible but absurd (Perls, 1969a). He presented this absurdity in a metaphor:

Applying this body-soul conception to mechanical things might help to show its absurdity. If you love your motor car, are thrilled with her lines, you might have a feeling that she had a soul. But who could possibly believe that her soul could suddenly leave her body to enjoy itself in a Heaven for motor cars (or suffer torture in a Hell for misbehaved vehicles), while the corpse of the car rots and rusts on a motor car graveyard? (Perls, 1947, p. 32)

Perls wrote that he did not accept dualism in any form, and that even Leibniz's preestablished harmony was based upon an artificial dichotomy. Perls concluded that the body and the soul "denote two aspects of the same thing" (Perls, 1947, p. 33).
Physiology, Emotionality, and Homeostasis

Perls (1947) believed that no emotion is felt without a physiological counterpart; for example, the anxiety attack that is felt in the lungs with shortness of breath, or the burning of the face with shame, or the heart pounding in anxiety. Perls wrote that the neurotic person experiences sensations not instead of emotions, "but at the expense or even to the exclusion of the consciousness of the emotional component....the person experiences...a scotoma for the psychological manifestation of the emotion" (Perls, 1947, p. 33). The physiological component of the emotion takes on the need for balance; there exists then an equality of the need for balance between the psychological and the physiological aspects of the person. Perls discussed this concept when defining and honing his conception of homeostasis. He described in great detail the concept of homeostasis in a later work:

All life and all behavior are governed by the process which scientists call homeostasis and which the layman calls adaptation. The homeostatic process is the process by which the organism maintains its equilibrium and therefore its health under varying conditions. Homeostasis is thus the process by which the organism satisfies its needs. (Perls, 1973, p. 5)

One finds in Perls (1947) a detailed analysis of the concept of homeostasis presented from the zero point
phenomenon and spoken of in terms of plus and minus from the zero point. Perls wrote: "Thus the plus and minus functions of metabolism represent the working of the basic tendency of every organism to strive for balance" (Perls, 1947, p. 34). Every organism, every person, strives for this internal and environmental balance. The organism seeks out, strives for, is pulled towards, a balance. The organism is teleologically oriented towards a homeostatic position.

This definition of homeostasis is different from that typically credited to Perls (M. Ward, personal communication, October 13, 1986). There is a polarity of homeostasis and heterostasis, yet Perls adopted a interactionalistic definition that incorporated aspects of both terms. When Perls wrote that there was a striving-forward movement, the goal of which is a balance, he was espousing an interactionalistic perspective of the homeostasis/heterostasis continuum.

Perls (1947, 1973) described the movement toward balance as simple steps that the organism experiences. The steps of homeostasis are as follows: The organism is in balance, a need disturbs this balance, the organism looks to itself and its environment and is drawn to that which will fulfill its need, the need is fulfilled or satiated then and the organism returns to balance. Perls wrote: "In the working of the organism, some happening tends to disturb its balance at every moment, and simultaneously a counter-tendency
arises to regain it" (Perls, 1947, p. 34).

Instincts

The description Perls wrote of using the word "need" is suggestive of instincts (Latner, 1988). Perls used the term "instincts" in many of his books, yet his definition was different from the common usage. Perls stated:

As long as we remain conscious of the fact that the term "instinct" is only a convenient word symbol for certain complex occurrences in the organism, we may use it. But if we regard an instinct as a reality, we make the dangerous mistake of conceiving it a "prima causa" and of falling into a new trap of deification. (Perls, 1947 pp. 34-35)

Henle (1978) referred to Perls use of the ego as an instinct in one of her critiques of Gestalt therapy. Perls, however, did not define the ego as an instinct. Perls stated that, "The ego is neither an instinct, nor has it instinct; it is an organismic function" (Perls, 1947, p. 36). Instincts within Gestalt therapy take on a symbolic meaning used to communicate a concept and do not have either psychological or physiological counterparts.

The Subjective and Objective Organism

The holism of the organism is central to the definition of the organism yet the organism does not live in a isolated
whole. The organism is not self-sufficient, but "requires
the world for the gratification of its needs....The organism
is a part of the world, but it can also experience the world
as something apart from itself as something as real as
itself" (Perls, 1947, p. 38).

Perls (1947) asked the question, what is reality? Where
does the subjective world cease to be subjective and the
objective world become reality? Perls described reality as
having three aspects; the first was the objective world,
from this world one creates a subjective world, and the
third aspect of reality which "plays an enormous part in our
life and civilization, and which has become a reality of its
own" is the pseudo-world or the world of projections (Perls,
1947, p. 39). Perls described reality in terms of layers of
awareness. He began with the belief that an absolute world
exists. That which exists for the individual becomes the
extent to which the individual is aware of the objective
world, whether this be a scientific knowledge or a knowledge
gained through reading of books or of experiencing the
world. The next layer consists of the average person's
subjective perceptions of the world and the individual's
relationship to it, and finally there is a
neurotic/inhibited layer in which the subjective world is
narrowed by the loss of senses and by social and neurotic
inhibitions.

There is an inter-dependency of the objective and
subjective worlds. Individuals often define their subjective experiences in relation to the objective world or because of the objective world (Perls, 1947). Needs felt by individuals find healthy gratification in the objective world.

Humans have in the gratification of their needs the conceptualization of figure/ground (Perls, 1947, 1973). It is not the same energized system of the Freudian cathexis; objects can not be charged with psychological energy as Freud hypothesized (Laborde, 1979). Figure/ground gratification of needs is based upon the interest and motivation of the individual rather than upon underlying conflicting psychological feuding. For example:

If one forgets to post the letter, this may not necessarily be due to a repression or resistance. It may, rather, be due to the fact that an interest in posting the letter is not intense enough to produce the figure-background phenomenon. (Perls, 1947, p. 41)

The existence of the subjective world depends upon the needs that tend to push forward, become figure, and demand gratification. If this is true as Perls reasoned, then how does "gestalt-psychology maintain that the organism 'answers to' situations?" (Perls, 1947, p. 43). Is the world created by the organism to meet its needs or does a world exist from which the organism meets its needs? "Both views are correct in toto" (Perls, 1947, p. 43).
Proactivity and Reactivity

Perls (1947) believed that people both acted upon and reacted to their environment. He said that people were neither exclusively proactive nor exclusively reactive. Perls defined these constructs in relation to the cycle of the inter-dependency of the organism and the environment. A human being has the potential to experience an internal disturbance in the inter-dependency cycle or an external disturbance in this cycle. Perls (1947) believed that the polarity of proactivity-reactivity was an artificial dichotomy. He wrote that, "Basically, the external cycle is not different from the internal" (Perls, 1947, p. 45). The reality lies in the perceptual need of the individual; the etiology of the perceived deficit or need is irrelevant. Perls (1947) concluded from his discussion of the interdependency of the organism that the human being was self-regulating, "which as W. Reich has pointed out, is very different from the regulation of instincts by morals or self-control" (Perls, 1947, p. 45). The organism strives for balance, for equilibrium, both intraorganismically and in relation to the outer world. The organism chooses to balance itself, to adjust itself in relation to its perceived needs and disturbances. The healthy individual is concerned with and takes responsibility for personal balance.

Many followers of Perls have interpreted this issue
differently and have agreed with Passons (1975) who wrote that the theory of Gestalt therapy views humans not from an interactionalistic self-regulating perspective but from a purely proactive perspective. Passons' hypothesis ignores Perls' comments about reality and the organism's perception of reality as originating from interdependency with the environment.

The Hunger Instinct

Perls replaced Freud's sexual instinct with a hunger instinct (Perls, 1947). Though the hunger instinct may be a dominant instinct within human beings, it is still dependent upon our interest and upon our present need. For example:

A hungry child does not just see a bread roll in the baker's shop. It looks, it stares at it. The sight of the bread does not evoke as a reflex the child's hunger. On the contrary, the hunger produces the effect of both being on the look-out for food and of moving towards it. A well-fed fashionable lady does not even see the same bread-roll, it does not exist, it is not "figure" for her. (Perls, 1947, p. 50)

This presence or the absence of the figure of the bread reflects the ego's capability of concentrating only on one thing at a time, regardless of how quickly humans can shuffle from one concept to another, or think rapidly of one topic, then another and on to yet still another. The fact
remains that the human's "Ego concentrates only on one thing at a time...and this...shows one great disadvantage: the organism can be taken by surprise can be caught unawares" (Perls, 1947, p. 50). Perls (1947) believed that humans compensate for this deficit by creating an internal censor, or moral watchdog. The censor may be directed inward or directed outward.

The goal of the censor is "to admit only such material as he considers good and to exclude all bad thoughts, wishes and so on (Perls, 1947, p. 51). This is interesting in that the bad thoughts an individual may decide to exclude could be thoughts generally held to be good thoughts (Perls, 1947). An example may help to make this point more clear. An individual who intends to commit the crime of murder first has a focused need, a figure of the murderous act that is directed towards the person to be murdered. This act, at that moment, is not interpreted or perceived by the individual who experiences the need as bad. The individual has been deceived by a lack of self-awareness. This deception in turn inhibits the natural flow of events in such a way that the individual experiences the need to murder as both a desirable and good activity.

Ethics

The reasoning cited above leads one to question the role of ethics or evaluations in the lives of human beings.
According to Perls, "Four ingredients...come together to mix the cocktail of ethics: differentiation, frustration, the figure-background phenomenon and the law that quantity changes into quality" (1947, p. 52). Differentiation has been defined and discussed elsewhere in this paper. Frustration means tension which Perls believed was necessary for real gratification. This concept is very similar to Freud's pleasure principle. If the individual has not learned to manipulate the environment to create and subsequently delineate the necessary tension to experience pleasure, the individual may resort to artificial tension creators, such as drugs or alcohol. If the individual chooses to create artificial tension, then remedial therapy becomes necessary in order to return the organism to the true zero point of living (Perls, 1947). The organism will begin to experience self-regulation again and function within the realm of the environment.

Perls (1947) wrote that if the individual masks the emerging inner need in favor of the environmental or the societal need, the moral need, that the organism is bound to suffer neurosis in that it has denied, cut-off, an aspect of itself. This type of environmental conformity was seen by Perls as infectious group neuroses. He wrote:

The infectious nature of neurosis is based upon a complicated psychological process, in which feelings of guilt and fear of being an outcast play a part, as well
as the wish to establish contact, even if it be a pseudo-contact. The drug addict induces others to indulge in the same habit...and the political idealist will try to convince everybody, by any means, that his particular outlook is the only "right" one. Und willst Du nicht mein Bruder sein, dann schlag ich Dir den Schaedel ein. (If you refuse to be my pal, I shall be forced to crack your skull). (Perls, 1947, p. 62)

According to Perls (1947) neurosis is a common phenomenon. Due to civilization's predilection toward neurotic demands for conformity at the expense of the individual's ability to meet needs that are dominant, "nobody is likely to have escaped some twist or other in his personality" (Perls, 1947, p. 63). Perls (1947) believed that people who do not choose to create a personal neurosis participate in a collective neurosis. Perls (1947, 1969a, 1973), thought that religion was the primary acceptable and prolific neurosis in civilization. If the person avoids accepting generally held collective neuroses, such as religion, then the person must contend with possible personal neurosis. Personal neurosis originates, first of all, from the rejection of a societal norm, religion, for example, and secondly, from acceptance of individual criminality as a result of nonconformist behavior; in other words, neurosis comes from rejecting a societal norm and then rejecting and alienating oneself as a coping mechanism
for rejecting the societal norm. Perls (1947) believed that this is the route some individuals choose when rejecting a societal super-ego; yet, he pointed out that most people choose to introject and thereby assimilate a tolerable amount of societal interdicts, including that of a god, thereby avoiding irresponsible self-alienation.

Characteristics of Neurosis

Neurosis is characterized by an avoidance; typically an avoidance of contact. The person chooses to avoid contact and, in so doing, suffers "an impairment of the holistic function" (Perls, 1947, p. 64). It is through the making of contact, not the avoidance, that one defines oneself as human, develops as a human, and maintains oneself as a human. One exception should be noted, "the avoidance of isolation" (Perls, 1947, p. 65). Perls (1947) wrote that this is best represented by the person who cannot say "no" and is avoiding the loss of contact. "Without the isolation component contact becomes confluence" (Perls, 1947, p. 65). Perls (1947) discussed neurosis extensively from the zero point perspective. Within neurosis there exists both a positive and negative pull or push that sets the individual off balance. The contact of the off balanced person with the environment is dysfunctional.

Usually involved with a neurotic incident is the experience of anxiety. Perls (1947, 1969a, 1973) defined
anxiety as the gap between the now and the then or the now and the future. Anxiety is experienced both emotionally and physically. For example, in the anxious state the individual often experiences oxygen deprivation or, to use the hunger instinct terminology, is starving from lack of oxygen. The organism is in poor contact with its environment and experiences anxiety which finds its manifestation in the excitement of both the central nervous system and the heightened emotionality found in neurosis. Perls wrote that:

One can learn to overcome anxiety by relaxing the muscles of the chest and giving vent to the excitement. Often no deep analysis is required, but if unconscious spasms of the chest and diaphragm muscles have become fixed habits, concentration therapy may be indicated." (Perls, 1947, p. 78)

Concentration Therapy

It should be noted that in the quote directly above Perls used the term "concentration therapy" to mean what is now known as Gestalt therapy. Concentration therapy became for Perls the replacement tool of psychoanalysis (Laborde, 1979). It was through the treatment of anxiety attacks that Perls operationalized the early practice of Gestalt therapy. One finds in his treatment strategy the holism of the therapy. In his strategy Perls treated both mind and body,
paid attention to the zero point, and recognized the individual's lack of homeostasis. He encouraged proactivity, and thereby the responsibility of the persons to act upon themselves through concentration and awareness of how they interrupt natural contact. Perls (1947) believed that this treatment strategy allowed clients to cure themselves.

Perls was rejecting Freud's ideas and in his practice replacing psychoanalysis with concentration therapy. In the late 1930's and early 1940's he formally began his reconceptualization of human beings. He did this first by replacing Freud's sex instinct with the hunger instinct, and second by placing a much greater role upon the ego-functions. During the time of *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression*, Perls still accepted the concept and definition Freud offered regarding the origin of neurosis. He stated:

The principal approach of Freud in the case of psycho-genic diseases is correct. A neurosis makes sense; it is a disturbance of development and adjustment; the instincts and the Unconscious [sic] play an immeasurably greater part in man than was ever dreamt of. Neuroses are the outcome of a conflict between organism and environment. Our mentality is determined more by instincts and emotions than by reason. (Perls, 1947, p. 81)

What is interesting about the above quote is Perls'
acceptance of Freud's concept, but also the last sentence where he wrote about the seeming power of the emotions in determining the personality of each individual. Adding to Perls' rejection of Freud was the power he placed upon the emotions, coupled with individual responsibility in the creation of the emotions.

The Rejection of Freud and Adler

Perls (1947) believed that Freud over-estimated causality, the past, and the sex instinct, and neglected the importance of purposiveness, present, and the hunger instinct. Perls (1947) rejected Freud's "archaeological" complex, his seemingly one-sided interest in the past and replaced it with a concentration on the present. Perls (1947) also rejected Adler's futuristic thinking and described it merely as the swinging of the pendulum from one extreme (Freud and the past) to another equally unacceptable position (Adler and the future). To Perls the correct sense of time was the present, the zero point, from which the balance may be disturbed by regressing to the past, or by fantasies into the future. Perls stated: "There is no other reality than the present...predilection for either historical or futuristic thinking always destroys contact with reality" (Perls, 1947, p. 92). Perls realized and acknowledged that everything "has its origin in the past and tends to further development,...the past and future take
their bearings continuously from the present and have to be related to it. Without the reference to the present they become meaningless" (Perls, 1947, p. 93).

Present Tense Orientation

Perls suggested that the present is where one experiences true reality and that delving into the past or flying off into the future as in a daydream, though sometimes necessary, should not be confused with living in the present. Perls was concerned that individuals might misinterpret his position on the present as excluding the past and the future. He said:

We must not entirely neglect the future (e.g. planning) or the past (unfinished situations), but we must realize that the past has gone, leaving us with a number of unfinished situations and that planning must be a guide to, not a sublimation of, or a substitute for, action. (Perls, 1947, p. 97)

Part Two of Ego, Hunger, and Aggression

Part Two of Ego, Hunger, and Aggression addressed various constructs that are vital to the life of the theory of Gestalt therapy. The section, entitled "Mental Metabolism", addressed the inner workings of the mind.

It is in this section that the influence of Smuts is readily apparent. The introduction includes a summary of
the activity of the mind to introject material that is often foreign in nature and then choose, according to its needs, to either project that material outside the conscious awareness of the mind, or to destructure and assimilate the material making it one's own. If the material is allowed simply to reside in the organism, unmetabolized and unassimilated by the personality, then it "may injure and even prove fatal to it" (Smuts, cited in Perls, 1947, p. 105). According to Perls (1947) the hunger instinct plays the major role in destructuring and metabolizing the material into the personality.

Hunger Instinct

Perls (1947) wrote of the hunger instinct while strongly holding that its physical counterparts of biting, hanging on, grinding, and the physical feeling of hunger, all correspond and have counterparts in the body and the mind. This is referred to as Perls' dental analogy (M. Fromm, personal communication, October 2, 1988). There are stages within the development of the hunger instinct. "The different stages in the development of the hunger instinct may be classified as pre-natal (before birth), pre-dental (suckling), incisor (biting) and molar (biting and chewing) stages (Perls, 1947, p. 109). Perls (1947) reminded his readers that the hunger instinct, like all else within
the theory, is related to the contact cycle. The hunger instinct also incorporates the resistances, such as introjection, operationalized in the gulping of food; projection, manifestated in the vomiting of food; and retroflection, found in inhibited aggression in biting and destructuring food.

Perls (1947) offered the association of teeth with aggression, i.e., pairing the hunger instinct with aggression. The teeth, Perls (1947) explained, were intended to be the biological outlet for natural aggression in the human being. Perls stated that, "Above all, the destructive tendency, ...should have its natural biological outlet in the use of the teeth" (Perls, 1947, p. 110).

Perls (1947) said that persons who introject without sufficient chewing, thus not destructuring their food, were often greedy, that they wanted to take in as much as possible with limited effort in doing so. The neurotic reaction to this is often played out in greed for affection, money or sexual pleasure, or compulsive hoarding behavior. The individual who chooses to eat only soft foods has a psychological counterpart as a person who avoids contact with the hard, often aggressive, reality of life and chooses instead to live in a self-created fantasy world avoiding contact. The analogies can be extended to many neurotic behaviors and it may lead one to conclude that Perls drew the analogy almost to the point of suggesting that a
therapist dine with a client in order to diagnose the client and plan an effective course of treatment.

Resistances

Within neurosis the resistances then become the devices by which an individual escapes from reality (Stratford, 1979). Perls paid specific attention to the neurotic use of the retroflection resistance as it pertained to the person and society.

Retroflection means that some function which originally is directed from the individual toward the world, changes its direction and is bent back towards the originator. An example is the narcissistic person who instead of directing his love outwards to an object falls in love with himself. (Perls, 1947, p. 120)

Perls (1947) believed that a person who used a verb in connection with a reflexive pronoun, e.g., "I took myself shopping as a reward," was suspect of retroflective behavior. He concluded from this that behaviors such as suicide are retroflective actions in which the aggression goes unrecognized in its natural form and finds inaccurately as its object the self. Aggression needs to find an outlet in an organismically and environmentally acceptable manner.

Society often mistakes aggressive behavior as emotional aggression. "The emotional equivalent of aggression is hatred" (Perls, 1947, p. 120). Perls believed that society
needs to recognize that one cannot successfully turn hatred into love, a view commonly held within the Judeo/Christian tradition; but rather hatred calls for appropriate avenues of expressed hostility. The opposite of hatred is not love, psychologically speaking (Perls, 1947), because hatred is masked aggression. Society, then, often masks a true emotion with an inappropriate opposite. This behavior may inhibit the organism. In inhibiting the organism by mislabeling emotions, the organism then denies itself, and according to Perls (1947) this behavior will find expression in dental inhibition and emotional resistance and neurosis.

The Organism and Ego-functions

Perls (1947) asked the question, what is appropriate and healthy mental food? The organism discerns appropriate mental food by attending to its organismic self-regulation, through destructuring and assimilating, and through a lack of inhibition to do so. Strong ego functions become important in order to allow the individual to attend to its self-regulation in awareness. The ego is not an organ but is a function of the organism. "It is not a concrete part...and for which no physical equivalent can be found either in the brain or in any other part of the organism" (Perls, 1947, p. 138). The ego then, is exclusively a mental phenomenon. The ego is unique in each human being and as such each individual experiences unique ego
boundaries according to the individual's own self-regulation. Perls agreed with Freud when he stated that the ego is closely related to identification. However, Perls stated:

Freud...overlooks the one fundamental difference between the healthy and the pathological ego. In the healthy personality identification is an Ego-function, whereas the pathological "Ego" is built upon introjections (substantial identifications) which determine the personality's actions and feelings, and limits their range...the ego becomes pathological if its identifications are permanent ones instead of functioning according to the requirements of different situations. (Perls, 1947, p. 141)

Ego-boundaries are essential in the identification of the personality as a distinct entity from its environment in the avoidance of pathological confluence.

Perls (1947) noted that, "Every inhibition and repression narrows down the Ego-boundaries" (Perls, 1947, p. 142). One may attempt to overcome an inhibition at first by acting "as if". This "as if" identification is not pathological unless the organism mistakes it for a real identification. Acting "as if" may sometimes be a healthy behavior, yet it has the potential for pathology if the individual blurs the boundaries between what is and what is not destructured and assimilated in the personality. Perls
(1947) believed that "as if" behaviors were found in relatively normal introjections, such as the child playing mother, and that such behavior tends to enlarge the ego-boundary.

Healthy ego boundaries are experienced as a balance of contact and isolation (Perls, 1947, 1973). For example, in embarrassment one finds contact, manifested in exhibition, and followed by hiding, the pre-differential stage of which is shyness. In identification with the object one finds embarrassing is a form of love, while alienation of the object from the self is a form of hatred.

The organism's ego becomes the connector between the actions of the whole organism in its effort to meet its most pressing need. "A healthy Ego-function answers the subjective reality, and the needs of the organism" (Perls, 1947, p. 146). A question then arises. Are people, as Freud said, servants in their own houses? Perls response to this question was that the concept that "we are not masters in our own house" is correct insofar as the "ego accepts orders from the instincts within the biological field, and from conscience and environment within the social field" (Perls, 1947, p. 147). Therefore the individual is both in control of and at the service of the ego. The organism interacts with the environment and within itself. It attends to that which becomes the dominant figure, e.g., a biological need to urinate will eventually overrule an
environmental need to communicate with another person. One may wonder whether Perls believed that the human being experiences and possesses free will or whether humans are at the mercy of their dominant figures.

Free Will

Perls rejected the constructs of the id and the superego as defined by Freud. The ego's lack of power becomes central to the issue of free will. The ego identifies itself with what it considers to be right for the organism and from this identification come the rudiments for philosophical belief in a free will (Perls, 1947). Perls (1947) said that the human being does in fact possess and exert control and power over itself, that it has the potential to determine its needs through organismic self-regulation, and through this self-regulation possesses free will. The organism chooses either holism with internal peace or it chooses instead to ignore itself and in so doing alienate itself from who and what it is. In alienating itself, it ignores its instincts, has blurred contact, ego-boundaries that are inadequate, and accepts and produces inadequate responses to its needs and to the environment (Harman, 1982).

Viewed holistically the process of denying one's free will results in a number of psychological pathologies as well as physical pathologies. An example of a physical
pathology is the production of pain as an avoidance of contact, such as the self-induced mask of the wife’s proverbial headache to stave off the sexual encounter with her husband that she does not want. Neurosis appears to be self created through a denial of the self-regulatory process. The neurotic person denies lack of responsibility and chooses to remain in the neurotic state, move into psychosis or become healthy.

Concentration Therapy

Individuals who experience dissonance with themselves due to some form of neurosis may find the ego strength to attempt to become healthy. Perls (1947) believed that concentration therapy was the appropriate tool for regaining psychological homeostasis. Perls (1947) attempted to actualize the theoretical concepts and constructs he discussed by describing his use of concentration therapy. In describing the technique of concentration therapy, Perls emphasized the predilection for emotions on the continuum of cognition and emotion. He stated: "The new technique developed in this book is theoretically simple: its aim is to regain the "feel of ourselves," but the achievement of this aim is sometimes very difficult" (Perls, 1947, p. 185).

Concentration is not a part of the body, or in any way considered a viceral substance, but rather an ego-function as well as a function of the unconscious (Perls, 1947).
"The harmonious function of both Ego and Unconscious is the basis for the 'positive', biologically correct concentration" (Perls, 1947, p. 187). Perls pointed out that his definition of concentration was not to be confused with the vernacular that included the aspect of a deliberate effect in the act of concentration but rather "the perfect concentration is an harmonious process of conscious and unconscious co-operation" (Perls, 1947, p. 187).

Perls' descriptions of the practice of concentration therapy incorporate the hunger instinct and the holism of body and mind. For example, Perls (1947) described a treatment plan for stammering, anxiety attacks, and undoing of a negation, or constipation. It is most interesting to this writer to read and capture the fine threads of theory he weaved while incorporating his major constructs. For example, one finds the hunger instinct woven throughout his chapter "Concentration on Eating" in which he addressed individuals who "feel like sneering at me for harping too much on the subject of eating" (Perls, 1947, p. 192). Perls retraced his developmental theory of the hunger instinct and applied it to the process of eating. Some of Perls' followers used this chapter in combination with the next chapter, "Visualization," to create and expand on the dental analogy.

In combining visualization with the hunger instinct it takes on a purely psychological meaning and has no physical
counterpart or manifestation. Perls (1947) described the phenomenon with both psychological and physical manifestations, yet this author found no empirical studies that addressed the physical counterparts Perls described. This writer found no empirical evidence suggesting that the hunger instinct is a reality outside of the psychological perspective with which many current Gestaltists view it (M. Fromm, personal communication, October, 2, 1988).

Responsibility

The chapters "Internal Silence" and "First Person Singular" are examples of Perls' (1947) belief in the proactivity of the individual; the responsibility of the individual's thoughts and behaviors lie with the individual and not outside the individual. The individual has the choice of introjecting and either destructuring and assimilating or vomiting out information and interactions that are dissonant to the organism. By attending to one's own internal silence one learns to value the self-regulating nature of the human organism. Valuing is made operational by the use of the first-person singular when the individual is referring to the self. Direct communication in the awareness of the ego-boundaries with the environment is evidence of responsible self-regulation.
Retroflection and Projection

Perls (1947) was clear in his chapters on retroflection and projection that these resistances have both positive and negative attributes. Appropriate resistances do exist; for example clapping of the hands in applause at an artistic performance is an acceptable universal retroflection (Perls, 1947). Applause is a substitute for patting the performer, finds its healthy expression in patting one's own hands with the intent to recognize the performer.

All of the resistances have the potential characteristics of both healthy expression and neurotic expression. The theoretician and practitioner need to be aware of this so as not to discourage healthy resistances.

Summary

The book Ego, Hunger and Aggression was Perls' attempt to lay the groundwork for the theory of Gestalt therapy. He spoke of awareness vs. consciousness, about the importance of living in the present, and the focus of the immediate figure in the here and now. Perls (1947) described homeostasis and defined and honed the construct into a unique definition. Perls spoke of his belief that humans could not be understood effectively without viewing them holistically, hence rejecting monism or dualism. Perls also said that in interpretation people are field theoretical and phenomenological. He therefore rejected nativism and
accepted environmentalism.

Perls (1947) described himself as an atheist and from atheism formed his opinion about human free will. Perls believed that humans are fully responsible both overtly and covertly for their behavior and thoughts. He adopted an interactionalistic approach to proactivity and reactivity which he did not find incongruent with full personal responsibility. Perls said that humans are fully responsible for the creation of their emotions and that emotions tend to be more powerful than reason.

The book Ego, Hunger, and Aggression was Perls' first major attempt to define and present his theory of human nature, psychopathology and psychotherapy. Chapter IV of this dissertation examines in detail whether in his later works Perls maintained, rejected or modified his views on human nature, psychopathology, or psychotherapy.
CHAPTER REFERENCES


CHAPTER IV

THE MATURE YEARS

Introduction

Chapter IV is divided into three broad sections. The first section is a discussion of Perls' later works in relation to the theoretical constructs outlined in the definition of terms section of this dissertation. The second section is a discussion of empirical studies conducted in relation to the theory and practice of Gestalt therapy. The third section is a brief discussion of the major constructs of Gestalt therapy as they are found in other major theories of counseling.

Determinism versus Free Will

Simkin and Yontef stated that "people, according to Gestalt therapy are responsible (response-able), that is, the primary agent in determining their own behavior" (1984, p. 291). Perls believed that human beings create their own thoughts and emotions and because those thoughts and emotions are of their own creation that humans are fully responsible for them. Humans have the potential to act upon themselves and upon their environments. According to Perls (1947, 1973) the human organism possesses free will and is
not determined by heredity or by environmental forces, though such forces can and sometimes do influence human behavior.

There are certain assumptions in society with which the individual must contend. People possess free will in their choices and in their values; they do not have choices over all things in their lives. People cannot choose the color of their skin or any other physical attribute that is determined by genetics. People cannot choose the environment into which they are born, for example, nationality or the socio-economic position of the parents.

People are free and therefore responsible for their behavior. For example, to suggest that poor people steal because of sociological overcrowding and poverty and not because they have chosen to steal is incorrect. Perls (1965d, 1973) placed free will and, therefore, responsibility on the person; to blame genetics, parents or one's environment was simply alienation of the self by the self to avoid responsible behavior.

The key to free will is awareness. People who are unaware are not fully responsible for their behavior. In order for people to be responsible they must have meaningful awareness of themselves. "Meaningful awareness is of the self in the world, in dialogue with the world, and with awareness of Other - it is not an inwardly focused introspection" (Simkin & Yontef, 1984, p. 290). Awareness
includes thoughts, emotions, and sensory receptors. In order to actualize one's free will one must be in awareness of oneself (Perls, 1978a, 1978c).

Perls and the theory of Gestalt therapy hold to a belief in free will; however, it seems more appropriate to this writer to term it free choice. Perls (1973) wrote about free will and responsibility. He also wrote about free choice. In describing the neurotic's lack of awareness and hence lack of free choice, he said:

He cannot decide for himself when to participate and when to withdraw because all the unfinished business of his life, all the interruptions to the ongoing process, have disturbed his sense of orientation, and he is no longer able to distinguish between those objects or persons in the environment which have a positive cathexis; he no longer knows when or from what to withdraw. He has lost his freedom of choice, he cannot select appropriate means to his end goals, because he does not have the capacity to see choices that are open to him. (1973, p. 24)

The human being possesses the potential to actualize free will. The human organism has free choice among finite incidentals. It cannot choose itself genetically but can act upon the genetics it is given. Likewise it cannot choose the environment into which it was born yet can and does act upon its environment once born.
Perls (1967a) demonstrated the application of free choice among finite incidentals when he dealt effectively with a client's impasse stage. In this film one sees the process of individuals becoming aware of how they keep themselves stuck, as a result of the greater awareness they move through the self-created impasse.

Perls (1967b, 1968a) showed his audience the importance of heightening awareness, thereby actualizing free choice and responsible behavior in the creation, resolution and integration of one's dysfunction. Perls showed that obesity and stuttering are both self-created dysfunctions that interfere with appropriate contact. The person who stutters and the obese person both self-create a barrier between themselves and their environments. Through appropriate self-discovery and awareness techniques, Perls demonstrated that the stutterer and the obese person could integrate their behavior into appropriate ego-boundaries and forfeit the loss of contact, thereby bringing them into full responsibility and exercising their free choice.

Unconscious versus Conscious

According to Wysong (1985) both Perls and the theory of Gestalt therapy have consistently interpreted the words "unconscious" and "conscious" to mean unawareness and awareness. The intent in re-labeling the terms was to move away from the Freudian concept of a dynamic and active
unconscious and move toward a concept that incorporated responsibility. Whether this was achieved has been debated (From, 1984).

Perls consistently (1947, 1966d, 1973) re-labeled the unconscious as the unaware. He wrote:

Many of the neurotic's difficulties are related to his unawareness, his blind spots, to the things and relationships he simply does not sense. And therefore, rather than talking of the unconscious, we prefer to talk about the at-this-moment-unaware. This term is much broader and wider than their term "unconscious". This unawareness contains not only repressed material, but material which never came into awareness, and material which has faded or has been assimilated or has been built into larger gestalts. As the conscious is purely mental in nature, so is the unconscious. But the awareness and unawareness are not purely mental. (Perls, 1973, 54-55)

Perls not only wrote about the unconscious and conscious as unawareness and awareness, he also demonstrated this belief. In many of his dream interpretation sessions Perls attempted to show how it was not a dynamic unconscious at work in dreams but rather the person experiencing the mind's creation in an altered state of awareness, which through experiential work could bear upon the individual's full awareness (1963, 1967c, 1968b).
Perls rejected the dichotomy of unconscious versus conscious in favor of unawareness and awareness. He did not accept Freud's topographical division but rather viewed this construct on a broad continuum encompassing the whole gestalt of which the person is. Perls, Hefferline & Goodman wrote:

"Unconscious" and "Conscious": if taken absolutely, this remarkable division, perfected by psychoanalysis, would make all psychotherapy impossible in principle, for a patient cannot learn about himself what is unknowable to him. He is aware, or can be made aware of the distortions in the structure of his actual experience. (1951, p. 285-286)

Monism versus Dualism

Monism versus dualism is an inappropriate nonsensical continuum in the theory of Gestalt therapy (Corsini & Marsella, 1983). Perls maintained throughout his writings a belief in the holism which defines the human organism. Perls rejected the philosophical belief that people can be dissected and defined by their various parts in favor of the philosophical belief that people can only be truly understood as a whole. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. "The healthy personality functions as a whole Gestalt (Corsini & Marsella, p. 374).

Perls wrote:
We cannot settle for any single "cause". We believe further that the "mental-physical" or "mind-body" split is an artificial one, and that to concentrate on either term in this false dichotomy is to preserve neurosis, not to cure it. (Perls, 1973, p. 53)

Perls (1967c) demonstrated in the case of Mary Kay how the human organism can adopt and live in a dualistic fashion increasing personal neurosis. He attempted in this film to show through integration of polarities and awareness that living in present-centered gestalts while attending to whatever becomes figure that a healthy whole person can emerge.

Physical versus Mental

M. Ward (personal communication October 13, 1988) commenting on the construct of physical versus mental said that Perls and the theory of Gestalt therapy did not view this construct as polarities but rather as a connected continuum of continually changing energy. To dichotomize this construct is seen as neurotic.

The Gestalt therapy view of this construct is expressed in the holism that Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman wrote about when they said: "Imagine a dance full of grace and joy. What is the situation in such a dance? Do we have a summation of 'physical' limb movements and 'psychical' consciousness? No." Their point was that it was absurd to
dissect the dance in order to understand it because it could only be understood from a holistic perspective of both mind and body. As Perls stated: "We believe that the "mental-physical" or "mind-body" split is an artificial one" (1973, p. 53).

Nativism versus Environmentalism

In the theory and practice of Gestalt therapy the human organism cannot be defined or adequately understood except in relation to its environment (Perls, & Clements, 1968). Perls wrote that humans are responsible for their behavior when they are aware of it (Perls, 1973). Because of the belief in responsible behavior and thought, Perls tended to lean towards the environmentalism side of this polarity (G. Huff, personal communication, November 4, 1988).

Nativism is recognized to the extent that facticity exists, facticity being the existential concept that recognizes individual responsibility for thought, emotion and behavior with the preclusion of genetics and any other factor completely outside the influence and control of the individual.

Neither Perls nor the theory of Gestalt therapy held or hold that the personality as such is determined by heredity. Certainly current theorists and practitioners of the theory accept heritability when it is shown to influence personality, for example, dwarfism: however cultural
reactions to dwarfism may mold the personality to a much greater extent than the physical deformity itself.

The theory of Gestalt therapy does not hold to a belief in inherited characteristics of the personality as other theorists might, such as Freud and his nativistic belief in the Id (Arlow, 1984). It has been suggested by non-gestalt therapists that Perls did hold to some nativism to the extent that psychoanalysis was still a part of his theoretical conceptualization of human beings (Henle, 1978). Even if this were true the theory of Gestalt therapy does not accept nativism as it is defined for the purposes of this dissertation. In reiterating what Simkin and Yontef wrote, one finds the strong environmentalism apparent in the theory of Gestalt therapy: "Meaningful awareness is of self in the world, in dialogue with the world, and with awareness of Other (1984, p. 290).

Elementalism versus Holism

Perls and the theory of Gestalt therapy reject elementalism as a belief system. Holism is central to the theory of Gestalt therapy. Many of the concepts such as gestalt, figure/ground, closure, and the motivation of behavior, are grounded in the belief of holism. Perls (1973) goes so far as to say that one cannot define the human organism apart from viewing it holistically. In defining awareness, Simkin and Yontef (1984) said that,
"Awareness is cognitive, sensory and affective" (p. 290) and that "in shouldistic regulation, cognition reigns and there is no felt holistic sense" (p. 293). Both of these comments are indicative of holistic thinking.

Holism is therapeutically operationalized through techniques seeking integration (Perls, 1948). The goal of the techniques is to "restore the organismic balance and to open the way for productive self-realization" (Perls, 1948 p. 574). This goal can only be understood and as such achieved with the underlying philosophical belief in holism.

A dualistic approach to integration is nonsensical in application to Perls' (1966a) concept of polarities which he sought to integrate in his film "Demon". The lack of polarity integration is viewed as neurotic with the goal of healthy holistic integration. The dualism in a polarity is behaviorally manifested in neurotic activities associated with an organism that is dynamically split. It is this type of dynamic split that Perls (1978a) discussed in addressing the concept of dualism in the mind/body split.

Holism is a thread that is heavily woven throughout all of that which is Gestalt therapy (From, 1984). The unity of the personality and the apparent neuroses in dichotomies yield their understanding from the philosophical construct of holism. "Man is whole who is (rather than has) a body, emotions, thoughts, sensations, and perceptions, all of which function interrelatedly" (Passons, 1975, p. 14).
Reactive versus Proactive

"Man is proactive rather than reactive. He determines his own responses to external and proprioceptive stimuli" (Passon, 1975, p. 14). As mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation Perls and Passons do not agree completely on the human organism's proactivity. Perls' definition of proactivity is coupled with the reality that humans are dependent upon their environments for definition. Humans do not totally act upon their environments. In the same vein of thinking as May and Yalom (1984) in their discussion of Existential psychotherapy is Perls (1978b) who said that individuals must contend with themselves in their environment while recognizing facticity and all its implications.

Perls certainly would reject reactivity as defined by Skinner, yet he tempers his definition of proactivity almost as if he were a soft-determinist.

Subjective versus Objective

This particular continuum is the only continuum under discussion in which it is difficult to place either Perls or the theory of Gestalt therapy at one end of the continuum or to reject the dichotomy altogether. As mentioned above, the theory of Gestalt therapy continues to include the concept of facticity. Because of this and Perls' discussions (1947, 1968c, 1969a, 1973) of drives and instincts, Kogan (1974)
placed Perls in the middle of this continuum. Kogan (1974) said that Perls may have been confused regarding this continuum. Zinker (1979) rebutted this conclusion and said that Perls merely accepted both polarities within the realms of his existential belief in facticity.

Perls (1947, 1967e) believed that the subjective world of experience was essential in defining the organism's personality. He also held that objective factors, such as heredity, or socio-cultural influences shape the personality. Part of the confusion on this continuum comes from Perls' use of classical psychoanalytic terminology (Zinker, 1979).

This continuum is closely related to the issue of free will versus determinism. It has already been established that Perls' belief was in free choice. Because of this and because of his phenomenological discussions he is more closely aligned with the subjective rather than the objective (Zinker, 1979). Gestalt therapy does not hold to the post a priori beliefs that are encompassed in the behaviorism camp of counseling theory, it more closely aligns with other humanistic psychologies in the belief in the subjective world of experience tempered with facticity.

Responsibility versus Helplessness

Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman (1951) wrote that the healthy human organism strives for self-support and not for
self-sufficiency. Self-support is defined as living and developing according to the natural occurrence of figural gestalts while attending to the interdependency of the human organism with its environment. Self-sufficiency is an illusion (Perls, 1968c). Perls (1973) wrote that the human being cannot define itself outside of the environment in which it lives. To be self-sufficient one must be able to survive without the influence of the environment; Perls did not believe that was possible.

The human organism recognizes that it functions and defines itself only in the context of its environment; yet, in order to become healthy, it must not be dependent on its environment. It meets its environment at the contact boundaries of its ego functions and to blur that line is dysfunctional. Perls wrote:

Full support for the self - overcoming the need for environmental support - can come only through making creative use of the energies that are invested in the blocks that prevent self-support. Instead of permitting our patients to see themselves passively transferring from the past, we have to introduce the mentality of responsibility which says: "I am preventing myself...". (Perls, 1973, p. 59)

Perls demonstrated his belief in the patient becoming more responsible for self-created dysfunctional activities. Perls (1965c, 1966) showed through various techniques his
goal to enable clients to recognize their responsibility in creating and maintaining their own dysfunction. It is not Perls' style, sometimes described as harsh and abrasive, that is under consideration at this time. It is the motivation for his behavior. The motivation for his behavior was to help his patients raise their awareness levels to include personal responsibility in the creation, maintenance, and subsequent cure of their dysfunction.

Perls criticized Freud's opinion that patients were victims of their own pasts and emotions. This Freudian deterministic perspective is the antithesis of Perls' belief and goal of personal responsibility. Perls did not believe that humans were victims of their emotions but rather that individuals both create and subsequently maintain their emotions.

Thinking versus Feeling

Perls relegated the emotional life of the human organism to the level of preeminence. Thinking for Perls was an important aspect of being human; however, thinking often turned into intellectualization and subsequently "mind-fucking" (Perls, 1969a). Self-truth was to be found in the emotional life of the human being. The way a person achieved this self-truth was through a process of discovery. It was not the emotion itself that was considered the identifier of self-truth but the process of discovery.
through experimentation (Simkin & Yontef, 1984).

Perls (1947, 1969a, 1973) clearly distinguished between emotional reality and cognitive reality. He was holistic in his approach; however, it seems as though a person's emotional life was given priority in the creation, maintenance and subsequent cure of dysfunctions. The theory of Gestalt therapy is holistic in that "awareness is cognitive, sensory, and affective" (Simkin & Yontef, 1984, p. 290). The theory holds that "in shouldistic regulation, cognition reigns and there is no felt holistic sense" (Simkin & Yontef, 1984, p. 289).

To a great extent the techniques of counseling and psychotherapy are affectively oriented in Gestalt therapy (Seltzer, 1984). A belief is held that the affective life of the client is where problems reside and to effectively treat the problem this area must be probed. Emotional catharsis is achieved through the process of experiential discovery of the way in which the client disallows parts of the self to emerge as needed to maintain healthy contact between ego-boundaries and the environment.

Watching or listening to a demonstration of Fritz Perls participating in psychotherapy, one may be struck by the intense emotionality that exists both in him and his clients. The technique of frustrating the client is seen repeatedly (Perls, 1963, 1967c, 1967d). The goal of the technique of frustrating the client is to bring to the
foreground the unfinished situation that is interfering with current contact. Perls demonstrated this technique with its emphasis upon emotional discharge time and time again (1963, 1965a, 1966a, 1966b, 1967d).

The criticism that Perls and the theory of Gestalt therapy are anti-intellectual may come from the preeminence placed upon the affect. There are current Gestalt therapists and certainly theorists from other therapies who agree that Perls was anti-intellectual (Wysong, 1985).

Haber (1978) pointed out how dissonant it appeared to have a man with a medical degree writing in such apparent anti-intellectual terminology. There is no doubt that Perls as a person disliked intellectualization. Goodman (1978) commenting on this, said that Perls not only disliked intellectualization but was as a person anti-intellectual.

Whether Perls was anti-intellectual or not, the fact remains that the theory of Gestalt therapy placed, and continues to place a great deal of importance on the affective nature of the human being in the creation and solution of its dysfunctional behavior. Some current theorists suggest a moderation in the emphasis on the affect. Simkin and Yontef (1984) wrote that there is an increase by some current writers of Gestalt theory and practice towards a more cognitive based treatment of clients.
Heterostasis versus Homeostasis

Perls' belief in homeostasis did not change in his later writings (G. Huff, personal communication, November 4, 1988). Perls wrote:

Our next premise is that all life and all behavior are governed by the process which scientists call homeostasis, and which the layman calls adaptation. The homeostatic process is the process by which the organism maintains equilibrium and therefore its health under varying conditions. Homeostasis is thus the process by which the organism satisfies its needs...the homeostatic process goes on all the time...when the homeostatic process fails the organism dies. (Perls, 1973, p. 5)

Perls viewed dysfunctional people as people lacking balance. The lack of balance almost always resided in their lack of awareness and their lack of effective ability to heighten their awareness and thereby deal with the unfinished situation or with the contact disturbance.

As discussed above, Perls' definition of homeostasis contained within it a sense of striving toward, a teleology. This coupled with the belief that individuals create and are responsible for their own difficulties resulted in Perls' rejection of the deterministic drive theory that characterized Freud's definition of homeostasis. "Living is a progression of needs met and unmet, achieving homeostatic
balance and going on to the next moment and new need" (Simkin & Yontef, 1984, p. 288). The achievement of homeostatic balance is but a mere moment in the forward movement of the next emerging gestalt, according to the theory of Gestalt therapy. There is no end to integration but rather a continual striving towards integration of who one is and actualizing one's potentials (Perls, 1969a).

Perls demonstrated this striving towards a homeostatic integration (1965b, 1966c, 1967d). It was most interesting for this writer to view Perls working with a client knowing that his goal was psychological integration of the personality in an effort to afford the client balance through discovery of the self.

Empirical Studies

Harman (1984) noted that articles about Gestalt therapy have appeared in Germany, France, Spain, Yugoslavia, Great Britain and the United States. The articles have appeared in a variety of journals with a variety of specializations, yet quality research in Gestalt therapy is sparse (Harman, 1984).

Research in Gestalt therapy has improved since Simkin's 1978 article. Simkin (1978) pointed out that it was not until 1973 that the "Psychological Abstracts" recognized Gestalt therapy as an entity separate from Gestalt psychology. In spite of Gestalt therapy meriting a separate
listing, confusion, cross listing, and incorrect listings still persist in the "Psychological Abstracts". For example a look in the Psychological Abstracts under Gestalt psychology reveals Gestalt family therapy and Gestalt marriage counseling, both of which belong under the broader title of Gestalt therapy.

Research in Gestalt therapy has been divided into five categories: 1) Effects of Gestalt marathons; 2) an analysis of Three Approaches to Psychotherapy, Part II, perhaps better known as the "Gloria film"; 3) analysis of specific Gestalt therapy techniques; 4) doctoral dissertations; and 5) comparisons of Gestalt therapy with other theoretical approaches.

Gestalt Therapy Marathons

Research in following up the effects of Gestalt weekend marathons and ongoing weekly groups by Guinan and Foulds (1970) suggested that Gestalt-oriented groups foster increased levels of self-actualization in normal growth-seeking college students. Foulds and Hannigan (1976) followed up Gestalt marathon participants six months later and discovered that achieved gains in self-actualization persisted over time. Greenberg, Seeman, and Cassius (1978) studied participants in a 45-hour marathon experience, in which the therapists worked generally from a Transactional Analysis and Gestalt therapy framework. Using the Tennessee Self Concept Scale, the Semantic Differential, and the Bach
Helpfulness Scale, they found significant positive changes on all measures for the treatment groups. A two-week post-marathon follow-up with the TSCS showed some shrinkage toward baseline, but with continued significant gains on some of the TSCS variables.

Three Approaches to Psychotherapy, Part II

Ramig and Frey (1974) applied content analysis and cluster analysis to the ideas of Fritz Perls to develop a taxonomy of Gestalt processes and goals. Applying these techniques to Perls' work in Three Approaches to Psychotherapy, Part II they found his work could be defined as a process in which the therapist seeks to skillfully frustrate the client in the here-and-now so as to facilitate organic contact with the environment, self-awareness, and maturation and autonomy. Most Gestalt therapists believed this anyway.

Using the 14-category Hill Counselor Response System, Hill, Tharnes, and Rardin (1979) analyzed the film Three Approaches to Psychotherapy in which Rogers, Perls and Ellis demonstrate their work. They found that the System was able to describe the verbal behavior of the three therapists and was able to detect behavioral differences reflective of their differing theoretical orientations. According to Hill et al. (1979) Perls used mostly direct guidance, information, interpretation, open questions, minimal
encouragers, closed questions, confrontations, approval-reassurance, and non-verbals.

Meara, Shannon, and Pepinsky (1979) analyzed *Three Approaches to Psychotherapy* using data generated from a computer-assisted language analysis system. Their analysis indicated that the therapists were different from one another on four dependent measures of stylistic complexity: 1) Number of sentences; 2) average sentence length; 3) average block length; and 4) average clause depth. Results imply, based on linguistic study, that Gloria's work with Perls led to concerted action.

Although they did not use the film *Three Approaches to Psychotherapy*, Tellgen, Frassa and Honiger (1979) had raters analyze videotaped Gestalt therapy sessions. Significant correlations were found between the therapists' traits of empathy, positive regard, genuineness, and "being-in-the-now," and the client traits of concentration, involvement, and experiencing. Sessions that were judged "adequate" were characterized by high rates of genuineness and "being-in-the-now" in therapists, and "being-in-the-now" in clients, and the pursuit of an internally perceived goal.

**Specific Gestalt Therapy Techniques**

Greenberg and his associates (Greenberg, 1980, 1983; Greenberg & Clark, 1979; Greenberg & Dompierre, 1981; Greenberg & Higgins, 1980; Greenberg & Rice, 1981; and
Greenberg & Webster, 1982) have published research in which they have investigated a specific Gestalt therapy technique, the two-chair technique of dealing with splits, conflicts or polarities. In a series of studies Greenberg and his associates (Greenberg & Clarke, 1970; Greenberg & Higgins, 1980; and Greenberg & Rice, 1981) found that the Gestalt two-chair technique led to a greater depth of experiencing than did empathic reflection. Greenberg & Dompierre (1981) substantiated the previous findings on depth of experiencing; they also discovered shifts in awareness, reported conflict resolution, and reported behavior changes were greater following the Gestalt interventions than did empathic reflection of feelings.

Preresolution and resolution, phases a patient goes through while experiencing the two-chair technique, led to a softening of the "harsh internal critic" (Greenberg, 1980). This "softening" implied an actual change and integration of polarities. Greenberg's (1983) related research demonstrated that conflict resolution performance in the two-chair dialogue occurs by a process of deeper experiencing of previously rejected aspects of the self.

Greenberg and Webster (1982) studied clients who experienced intrapsychic conflict related to making a decision. In this study, clients who experienced a softening of their "critic" showed greater conflict resolution, less discomfort, greater mood change, and
greater goal attainment than clients who did not experience the "softening". The finding of Greenberg and his associates support the contention of Gestalt therapists that they provide an intense experience in many of their sessions.

**Doctoral Dissertations**

Many of the dissertations reviewed for this dissertation were theoretical in nature rather than empirical research. For example, Norton (1980) proposed a Gestalt theory of child development. For the most part in doctoral dissertations there is a lack of trained Gestalt therapists. Usually in doctoral research the student provides two to four training sessions for other doctoral students on some specific Gestalt therapy technique. This should not qualify as Gestalt therapy research (Harman, 1984). Two notable exceptions are the dissertations of Little (1981) and Stewart (1976).

Little (1981), a trained Gestalt therapist, provided ten weeks of group therapy for parents of problem children. After treatment, parents were more like "normal" parents on scores of rejection, ignoring, overprotectiveness, overindulgence, and extrinsic valuing (Little, 1981). Gestalt therapy was effective in altering parenting styles described as dysfunctional.

Sex role stereotyping in psychotherapy with women as a
function of therapeutic orientation and sex of therapist was the topic of Stewart's (1976) dissertation. She compared differences between psychoanalysts and Gestalt therapists and between male and female therapists of each modality in terms of type of response (approach or avoidance) to specific kinds of statements by the female client - dependency, hostility toward others, hostility toward therapist, sexuality, assertiveness, traditional sex role, non-traditional sex role, and career achievement. Gestalt therapists gave more approach responses overall and specifically in response to traditional sex role, career achievement, assertion, hostility toward others, and dependency statements by clients while psychoanalysts were more likely to give avoidance responses to these types of statements. Gestalt therapists showed significantly more favorable attitudes toward feminism than did psychoanalysts.

Comparing Gestalt Therapy with Other Approaches

Smith and Glass (1977) "meta-analyzed" nearly 400 controlled evaluations of psychotherapy and counseling. They found, on the average, the typical therapy client to be better off than 75 percent of the untreated individuals. Their analysis included many different kinds of psychotherapy, but there was an inadequate number of studies for them to make firm statements about Gestalt therapy's effectiveness (Harman, 1984). This points out the absence
in the literature of controlled studies involving Gestalt therapy.

In a study of the effects of encounter groups, Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles (1973) compared the effects of ten different kinds of encounter groups, including Gestalt therapy. Among many findings, they found one Gestalt group to be among the lowest in producing positive change, such as responsible references with regard to personal behavior and one Gestalt group to be among the highest in producing negative changes, for example, an inappropriate emotional reaction to a group member where the behavior did not exist before Gestalt therapy treatment. Equivocal findings like these need to be replicated.

The effects of the ABC's of Rational Emotive Therapy and the empty-chair technique of Gestalt therapy on anger reduction were studied by Conoley, et al. (1983). They found both treatments successfully reduced blood pressure and lowered Feeling Questionnaire scores significantly more than the control condition. However, they were unable to differentiate between the effectiveness of either treatment.

Petersen and Bradley (1980) hypothesized that counselors' attitudes would be a function of their theoretical orientation and experience. They tested their belief with counselors from Behaviorist, Gestalt, or Rational-Emotive orientations. Results showed a significant relationship between counselor orientation and theoretical
tenets. Level of experience did not contribute to counselor attitude.

The research of Brunink and Schroeder (1979) is unique in that they used "expert" Psychoanalysts, Gestalt therapists, and Behavior therapists instead of graduate students briefly trained in techniques. A content analysis of audio-tapes revealed that the therapists from the three modalities were similar in their communication of empathy and dissimilar to the other therapists. The authors went on to say that compared to the other two types, Gestalt therapists provided more direct guidance, less verbal facilitation, less focus on the client, more self-disclosure, greater initiative, and less emotional support.

In other research, married couples were assigned for treatment to either Gestalt relationship facilitation or to relationship enhancement treatment. Jesse and Guerney (1981) found there were significant gains for participants in both groups on all variables studied. Couples increased positively on marital adjustment, communication, trust and harmony, rate of positive change in the relationship, relationship satisfaction, and ability to handle problems. Relationship enhancement participants achieved greater gains than Gestalt relationship facilitation participants in relationship satisfaction and ability to handle problems.

Sobel (1979) investigated client preference for
behavioral, analytic, or Gestalt oriented therapists. His results showed that young females, but not young males, significantly preferred behavioral therapy for a specific phobia. Under forced choice conditions the group significantly preferred Gestalt therapy. No differences were found for the relationship or preference given a depressive disorder.

In related research, Sobel and O'Brien (1979) found no differences in client expectation for positive counseling results from analytic, behavioral, or Gestalt oriented therapists.

Conclusions

Fagan and Shepherd commented on the difficulty of doing research in Gestalt therapy:

Most often hard data are difficult to obtain: The important variables resist quantification; the complexity and multiplicity of variables in therapists, patients, and the interactional process are almost impossible to unravel; and the crudeness and restrictiveness of the measuring devices available cannot adequately reflect the subtlety of the process. However, the fact that the task is difficult does not reduce its importance, and there is a need for many questions to be asked and answered by the more formal procedure available to researchers. (1970, p. 241)
This same message is as true today as it was in 1970.

Gestalt therapists are seldom found in academic positions, since they would generally rather do therapy than theorize about it (Wysong, 1985). More typically they are in private practice or in service agencies where research takes a back seat to practice. Most Gestalt therapists are not academicians and most academicians are not adequately trained in the practice of Gestalt therapy (Harman, 1984). Yet academicians, generally superficially trained at best, are responsible for most of the research in the field. Harman (1984) said that most academicians' knowledge of Gestalt therapy is only peripheral and they consequently are unable to properly measure its intricacies. One way around this problem is for Gestalt therapists and research-minded academicians to join forces, and set up controlled studies under joint supervision. The bottom line is that more quality research of the empirical and theoretical kind needs to be done.

Other Theories that hold Parallel Positions

This section is included in this dissertation for the purpose of presenting a cursory view of other major counseling theories that support parallel theoretical positions that have been espoused by Gestalt therapy. It is not the intention of this dissertation to provide the reader with a detailed and exhaustive account of the similarities
and differences that exist between Gestalt therapy and other major theories of counseling. That task simply is beyond the scope and purpose of this dissertation and it would be an injustice to the endeavor to suggest that it could be done as a subsection of a chapter.

This section focuses on the major theories outlined in Corsini (1984) as they pertain globally to the theory and practice of Gestalt therapy according to the theoretical constructs discussed throughout this dissertation and specified in the definition of terms section.

Psychoanalysis and Gestalt Therapy

Psychoanalysis and Gestalt therapy hold opposing opinions on the following continua: 1) Determinism versus Free Will; 2) Unconscious versus Conscious; 3) Monism versus dualism; 4) Nativism versus Environmentalism; 5) Elementalism versus Holism; 6) Reactive versus Proactive; 7) Subjective versus Objective; 8) Responsibility versus Helplessness.

According to Arlow (1984) psychoanalysis views the human organism from a monistic, biological perspective. Gestalt therapy holds that the human being is both physical and mental. Perls viewed the human as holistic.

The construct of Thinking versus Feeling psychoanalysis holds that the human organism is directed primarily by drives rather than cognition or affect. Contrary to this
belief, Gestalt therapy specifically addresses the affect as the primary motivator of behavior and change.

Psychoanalysis and Gestalt Therapy hold similar positions on the construct of Heterostasis versus Homeostasis in that they both espouse a homeostatic belief (Arlow, 1984). This construct has been addressed elsewhere in this dissertation. Though the two theories use the same word, homeostasis takes on a different meaning in the two theories and has very different ramifications in the theories.

**Individual Psychology and Gestalt Therapy**

Adlerians typically hold to a belief in soft determinism or to free will (Mosak, 1984). This is similar to Gestalt therapy's belief in free choice coupled with facticity. Gestalt therapists believe in at-the-moment-awareness. Adlerians stress the conscious and do not believe that the conscious and the unconscious are conflicting parts as Freud said. Adlerians are holistic in their approach and conceptualization of human beings (Mosak, 1984). Gestalt therapists are likewise holistically minded (Passons, 1975). The term "individual" in Individual psychology means indivisible; the term "gestalt" in Gestalt therapy encompasses the same type of holism. The continuum of physical versus mental takes on a similar definition in the holistic approach of both theories, the dichotomy seen as
artificial.

The continuum of nativism versus environmentalism is related to the issue of determinism versus free will. Adlerians hold to a soft determinism or to free will as such rejecting nativism except in light of facticity. This is the same position Gestalt therapist's generally hold (Harman, 1984). Both Gestalt therapy and Individual psychology hold that human beings are proactive. Because both theories hold that human beings are responsible for their thoughts, feelings, and behavior and not victims of heredity or a dynamic unconscious, they also reject the objective polarity in the subjective versus objective dichotomy.

The two theories find their major differences in the constructs of thinking versus feeling and heterostasis versus homeostasis. Adlerians believe that cognition is preeminent, that humans both create and cure their dysfunctional behavior through thought control and awareness. Gestalt therapists believe the affect is preeminent. Adlerians are teleological and believe in movement guided by subjective goals. Gestaltists believe in homeostasis as defined above.

Analytical Psychotherapy and Gestalt Therapy

Jung and Perls were very different types of men; as such their theories were very different. Haber (1978) draws a
conclusion that Jungian analysis can be operationalized with Gestalt therapy techniques. He pointed out that there were great philosophical differences in the two theories and that the similarities basically came from the emphasis placed upon polarities and dream interpretation in each theory. The only major construct that is very similar in the two theories is homeostasis. Both theories espouse a belief in striving for a balance. The two theories come close to agreement with regards to an emphasis on the preeminence of the affect and on emphasizing the subjective in the subjective versus objective dichotomy (Kaufmann, 1984). On the other constructs these two theories are dissimilar.

**Person-Centered and Gestalt Therapy**

According to Herlihy (1985) the theories of Rogers and Perls are very similar in their existential philosophical beliefs, particularly the belief in the inherent self-actualizing/self-regulating behavior of the human organism. Other similarities include a belief in experiential therapy, present-orientation, Perls' five layers of neurosis and Rogers' seven stages of process, the emphasis on process through experiential learning, free choice with facticity, consciousness as awareness, field theoretical, holism, organismic self-valuing, proactivity, subjectivity, responsibility, and the preeminence of the affect.

The two theories differ quite dramatically in the
operational manifestations of their philosophical beliefs. The difference in techniques come from other philosophical beliefs and from the environments in which the theorists wrote, as well as the persons on whom they normed their theories.

Rogers worked and normed his theory primarily on college students, Perls worked as a psychoanalyst for years, always in private practice with clients, and as a trainer of other therapists.

**Rational-Emotive Therapy and Gestalt Therapy**

Areas of similarity between Rational-Emotive Therapy and Gestalt therapy lie in the concentration upon consciousness, free will, and proactivity. Ellis (1984) viewed clients holistically rather than analytically. Rational-emotive therapy emphasizes the biological aspects of the human personality, which is similar to Perls holistic view of mind and body.

One major difference between the two theories is Perls' emphasis upon the affect and Ellis' emphasis upon cognition as the key to the creation, maintenance and subsequent cure of pathology. In style of practice there are similarities between these two theories. Both theorists have been viewed as sometimes abrasive, frustrating their prospective clients and making use of confrontation.
Radical Behaviorism and Gestalt Therapy

Skinner and Perls disagreed regarding the determinism versus free will issue yet agreed that humans do not have a dynamic unconscious. Skinner is a monist, Perls a holist. Both men have written that the environment shapes the personality, Skinner more rigidly than Perls. Skinner sees the human organism as reactive with its environment (Wilson, 1984); Perls saw the human as proactive (Passons, 1975). The construct of affect versus cognition is irrelevant to Skinner; affect is essential to Perls' theory. Striving for balance is striving to fulfill the next emerging gestalt to Perls; Skinner found no relevance in heterostatic or homeostatic beliefs. In brief, these two theories have very little in common.

Social Learning Theory and Gestalt Therapy

Social learning theory speaks of the organism in its stimulus-response thinking. Because of this it more closely aligns with the theory of Gestalt therapy than does Radical Behaviorism. Because of the S-O-R thinking, Bandura, in particular, allows the organism some input, therefore bringing it closer to responsibility and offering the organism options in its environment. Descartes "Cogito ergo sum" is appropriate to social learning theory; Perls may have rewritten this to say, "I am, therefore I think" (Wysong, 1985). There is very little personality theory in
behaviorism and as such it shares little with a humanistic theory like Gestalt therapy (Wilson, 1984).

**Reality Therapy and Gestalt Therapy**

Reality therapy focuses on the present, holds that individuals are responsible for what they do, claims that humans have needs that emerge and must be fulfilled, and that in fulfilling these needs the individual is responsible for not infringing on another person's ability to fulfill their needs. These beliefs are not dissonant to Gestalt therapy. According to Glasser (1984) the human being is proactive in seeking homeostasis, a view similar to Perls' position.

The biological foundation that Glasser wrote from, particularly later in control therapy, as well as his steps in therapy find little acceptance in Perls' theory. Glasser stated that humans are slightly determined when he wrote: "We are all searching for control and have no choice but to continue this search" (Glasser, 1984, p. 241). Perls believed in free choice and that humans do have a choice whether or not to continue their search for control, if in fact this is what they are doing.

**Existential Psychotherapy and Gestalt Therapy**

Perls (1947, 1969a, 1973) wrote that existentialism was one of the foundations of the theory of Gestalt therapy.
The theory of existential psychotherapy according to May and Yalom (1984) holds similar philosophical beliefs in all of the constructs under discussion except thinking versus feeling and heterostasis versus homeostasis.

In existential psychotherapy the construct that polarizes cognition and affect is nonsensical (May & Yalom, 1984). According to May and Yalom (1984) existential anxiety is the motivation for the future. This is different from Perls' definition of anxiety, which is the gap between the now and then or now and future. Perls was present oriented, existential psychotherapy has teleological tendencies.

As noted elsewhere, the concept of facticity is derived from the theory of existentialism and aided Perls in defining and explaining his definition of free choice. Because of facticity one does not have unlimited freedom. For example, one cannot choose not to die; death is not a choice.

The concepts of Unwelt, Mitwelt, and Eigenwelt are adequately described in Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1951). The ontological experience of "I-Am" is important to both theories. In brief, Perls introjected, de-structured and assimilated many of the major constructs of existentialism as a philosophy that assisted his development of a counseling theory.
Transactional Analysis and Gestalt Therapy

No other theory has been more widely integrated with Gestalt therapy than Transactional Analysis (M. Fromm, personal communication, October, 2, 1988). Many writers, including the Gouldings, have blended these two theories of counseling.

Philosophically the two theories are not dissonant, in practice they are very different (Dusay & Dusay, 1984). Both theories place heavy emphasis on balance, and striving for appropriate healthy balance through experiential, often affective psychotherapy.

Berne wrote in terminology that was very different from Perls, an example of which is the topographical structure of Parent, Adult, and Child. Berne tried to link this triad to time which differed greatly from Perls' present orientation. Berne discussed the Parent as originating in the past but remaining alive in the present sometimes providing a healthy function. Perls would call this unfinished business requiring closure (Perls, 1973).

Transactional analysis speaks of an innate need for strokes (Dusay & Dusay, 1984, p. 392). Perls would reject such a notion; an innate need for strokes is not encompassed in the existential concept of facticity.
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CHAPTER V

LIMITATIONS AND SUMMARY

Limitations of Gestalt Therapy

As stated in Chapter I of this dissertation, Perls (1947) intended that the theory and practice of Gestalt therapy evolve within a developmental framework. Perls did not intend for his theory of counseling to be limited to the time period in which he lived and wrote. The theory of Gestalt therapy did not die with the death of its founder; and indeed has evolved since Perls' death in 1970. Current leading Gestalt practitioners and researchers met in Montreal in July, 1988 to discuss the most recent theoretical and political issues surrounding the survival and development of the theory of Gestalt therapy.

Miller (1988) stated that in his opinion the theory and practice of Gestalt therapy is at a crossroad in history. He spoke of a current mixture of promise and bleakness with regard to where the theory has come and where it will be going. Miller (1988) said that Gestalt therapy is no longer an avant-garde movement, although it may not have adequately distinguished itself in an effort to avoid absorption in other theories.

Miller (1988) was aware that there is a clinical
acceptance of the practice of Gestalt therapy; however, he reported that the theory of Gestalt therapy continued to suffer from misrepresentation, "particularly in undergraduate and graduate level textbooks". Miller (1988) stated that the misrepresentation of Gestalt therapy in textbooks has been further hindered by practicing Gestalt therapists who have contributed to the partial demise of the theory by ignoring crucial elements of the theory that distinguish it from other theories.

Miller called for resolutions of the problems he perceived in current Gestalt therapy. He suggested that Gestalt therapy in practice needs to be grounded in the developmental perspective that was described in Volume Two of Perls, Goodman, and Hefferline (1951). Miller (1988) said that Volume Two of Perls et al. (1951) has historically been ignored by both Gestalt therapists and therapists from other theories, while too much attention has been paid to the improvement and evolution of certain techniques. Technique finds its eloquent expression through a solid foundation in theory, not in the void and ignorant refinement of an act.

Current Gestalt therapy is losing some of its distinctiveness as aspects of its theory become assimilated into other theories without reference to Gestalt therapy (Miller, 1988). For example, much of the current theory
expressed in Object Relations sounds like Gestalt therapy, e.g. the statement referenced by Miller (1988) when discussing a recent chapter in a textbook on Object Relations that described contact as "introjection and projection made and remade in ongoing relationships". This statement appears to be lifted from Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1951).

Miller (1988) commented that the writers and researchers of the theory of Gestalt therapy have traditionally only reported success in the journals and books. Miller (1988) called for a more "tragic" view of psychotherapy. He recognized a need for balance of success and failure to adequately renew the theory. Miller (1988) said that "to suggest, especially only to ourselves, that we experience nothing but therapeutic success is pure fantasy".

Yontef (1988) commenting on the present state of Gestalt therapy, said that research in the theory of Gestalt therapy is abysmal, that there is a lack of organization of what now exists and that the phenomenological viewpoint of Gestalt therapy has not been well organized and presented in the literature. He called for better organized research that attends to the dialogic approach to counseling and the reporting of great case studies that clearly show the connection between theory and its application. The call for quality research is not unique to Yontef. Wysong (1985, 1988) has repeatedly pointed out the need for quality
research in journals particularly in those other than *The Gestalt Journal*.

M. Polster & Zinker (1988) both stated that the era of guruism is more than over and as such the responsibility of adequate training of Gestalt therapists who do more than mimic their teachers is an essential task if the theory and practice of Gestalt therapy is to continue. It is a primary goal in Gestalt therapy to make good contact with the client. This can only be accomplished through knowledge of the art of self engaging another human being in the dialogic approach, not through application of games or techniques. Good contact in Gestalt therapy is made through an informed decision to freely engage another human being with full existential knowledge of who one is and in what way one brings the self into this contact.

Brown (1988) said that many therapists who identify with the theory of Gestalt therapy consider the theory simple. It is at times deceptively simple. However, it is not now nor has it ever been "a bag of tricks and a collection of collapsible chairs" (Brown, 1988).

M. Polster (1988) in quoting Koffer said that one of the signs of a great society is not in what it owns but in how it maintains what it possesses. Polster went on to claim that many Gestalt therapists are doing little if anything to maintain the elegant theory Perls wrote about. She said that, sadly, much of the theory of Gestalt therapy
is ignored while the techniques are being taught as if they were in fact the theory and not merely a product of the theory. Wysong (1988) commented on this travesty when he reported that many of the training institutes are using Gestalt Therapy Verbatim instead of Ego, Hunger, and Aggression to teach the theory of Gestalt therapy. These institutes are simply ignoring the theory of Gestalt therapy in favor of teaching void techniques.

From (1988) called for a refinement of the theory, particularly regarding the issue of contact, precontact and postcontact. He suggested that theorists pay specific attention to how they maintain archaic language that is reminiscent of, and at times interpreted as, an extension of Classical Psychoanalysis. The language of the theory needs to be consistent among its followers if those of other theories are to ever adequately understand the principles Perls espoused.

E. Polster (1988) pointed out that, disregarding the literature altogether, one is often dumbfounded by the emphasis Gestalt clinicians place on a particular concept in the theory. He said there are some who are contact oriented Gestalt therapists, some who are awareness oriented Gestalt therapists, and some who are experiential oriented Gestalt therapists. There is a need for further refinement in theory and in practice of the theory. As a Gestalt therapist one must contend with and ultimately admit that
one concentrates on one aspect of the theory while perhaps ignoring major constructs. Certainly a therapist has a choice never to use an experiment with a particular client, while being almost exclusively experiential with another client. There is room in Gestalt therapy for professional judgment, however it seems important to understand the motivation for such choices and to incorporate theoretical background in one's professional judgment. This is not to suggest that the practice of Gestalt therapy should become stylized to the extent that Classical Psychoanalysis became. It is merely to suggest that boundaries exist and there is a point at which a therapist deviates from one theory into another.

According to Latner (1988) there is a pluralistic form of Gestalt therapy and a more refined form of Gestalt therapy. Latner (1988) believed that these two forms of the theory originated from a lack of defined and consistent theory. In other words, the theory has a bad figure, and has lost its center in favor of individualistic technical practices labelled "Gestalt therapy". Theory is not monolithic; it is a process, a development. The assumption is that theory develops and techniques follow as a result. According to Wysong (1988) this has not happened, and the Gestalt training institutes are primarily at fault for promoting techniques at the expense of theory.

Wysong (1988) offered advice to novices examining the
theory of Gestalt therapy. He suggested several readings of Perls (1947) closely followed by methodical readings of Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1951). Latner (1988) stated that training as a Gestalt therapist is a long arduous task and to claim that one is a Gestalt therapist after a course or two in theory or after attaining perfection in the imitation of a technique is preposterous and unworthy of serious consideration. The training of a Gestalt therapist takes years of reading, discussion, and the acquisition of the ability to think in process terms. From (1988) said that prior to reading Perls (1947) or Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman (1951) students should sufficiently acquaint themselves with the writings of Freud, Rank, and Reich. From (1988) said that Goodman in the second volume of *Gestalt Therapy* assumed that the reader was familiar with these three writers, hence it would be futile for a student of Gestalt therapy to attempt to understand Goodman without training in the basic principles of Freud, Rank, and Reich. Rawle (1988) cautioned all students of the theory to remain novices and not succumb to the belief that one has arrived and successfully de-structured and assimilated the theory into one's own life and practice as a therapist.

To sum up, many of the leaders of the theory and practice of Gestalt therapy have reported that Gestalt therapy has a poor Gestalt. A primary reason for the poor Gestalt is the lack of quality research in the theory and
the application of the theory reported in the journals. Too often Gestalt therapists are more concerned with their own abilities to imitate techniques thus effectively avoiding the true phenomenological reality in the therapeutic dialogue. There is a need for thoughtful digestion of the experiences and writings of the primary founder of the theory of Gestalt therapy and the developmental realities that have followed.

Summary

In preceding chapters, this writer has presented a description of the theoretical tenets Perls presented in the collection of his works with particular attention given to the constructs described in the "Definition of Terms" section of Chapter I. Perls wrote a theory of counseling that currently is suffering from lack of definition and communal goals. Chapter I addressed this lack of qualitative identification and pointed out that the void in meaning associated with the terms "Gestalt therapist" and "Gestalt therapy" is a result of no known cumulative document examining Perls' works in relation to major constructs.

This final chapter begins with a disscussion of the limitations of Gestalt therapy, adds a brief summary highlighting major identifications regarding the constructs under investigation and is followed by a discussion of the
limitations of this dissertation, and a brief section discussing the future of Gestalt therapy in relation to this study.

In each of the constructs under investigation one finds in Perls' published thought a response either of agreement or of thoughtful disagreement. In tracing Perls' works one finds a man acutely aware of his own process thinking and expounding this through the changes in his theoretical writings. Many of Perls' early published thoughts, particularly those regarding Psychoanalysis, find extreme modification in later publications. Perls' acceptance of Psychoanalysis and subsequent rejection of Classical Psychoanalysis lasted his entire psychiatric career (Bernard, 1986). It would seem that Perls could never truly finish the unfinished business he carried with him regarding Freud and Psychoanalysis.

Perls' works span decades and although they may not at first appear to possess consistency, with refined analysis they do in fact build upon one another with a theoretical thread tying them one to another. Perls' early works and his later works are different. The later works build upon the early theoretical writings, they do not make his earlier works null and void, but rather represent the techniques developed from the theory.

Summary descriptions of the theoretical base in relation to the constructs identified and under discussion in this
Theoretical Constructs

Perls (1947) viewed the human being as possessing free will while being cognizant of facticity. From his belief in free will came his belief in the human's responsibility for thought and behavior. To the extent that individuals are capable of awareness, including thoughts, emotions, and sensory receptors, then they are responsible for them (Simkin & Yontef, 1984). Typically, individuals suffering with neurosis have chosen to close themselves to their own awareness.

The term "awareness" in Gestalt therapy is regarded as analogous to consciousness (Perls, 1947, Perls, et al. 1951)). Perls (1947, 1966d, 1973) re-labeled the unconscious as the unaware. The concept of awareness and unawareness is not dichotomous in Gestalt therapy but rather represents two ends of a continuum that encompasses a whole Gestalt. The whole Gestalt cannot be understood in a dissected form. To even suggest that it can be dissected is nonsensical in the theory of Gestalt therapy. The theory of Gestalt therapy does not view humans as either monistic or dualistic, but rather in an holistic framework.

M. Ward (personal communication October 13, 1988) best summed up the construct of Physical verses Mental when she said that Perls and the theory of Gestalt therapy did not
view this construct as polar opposites but rather as a connected continuum of continually changing energy. There is no mental-physical or mind-body split in Gestalt therapy and to suggest one is non-sensical in the theory (Perls, 1973).

According to Perls and Clements (1968) in the theory and practice of Gestalt therapy the human organism cannot be defined or adequately understood except in relation to its environment. Perls recognized nativism only to the extent that he accepted the concept of facticity. It is the contact with the environment that assists in the identification of the healthy ego boundaries. Without the environment there would be no contact and no self to define and develop.

The self is proactive with its environment. It is both defined in relation to its environment and acts to mold its environment to meet its definition of itself. This is accomplished subjectively according to ones own existential reality. Humans are fully responsible for this manipulation of the environment and the self in relation to the environment. Perls did not believe that it was possible for the human to be self-sufficient, to survive without benefit of the environment. He did believe that humans were capable of and desirous of healthy self support.

Healthy self support arises from awareness of oneself and particularly one's emotional life (Perls, 1947) in
relation to the balanced progression of needs met and unmet. Healthy self support comes through striving towards a homeostatic integration of these needs (Perls, 1965b, 1965c, 1966c, 1973).

**Future of Gestalt Therapy**

Perspectives of current major theorists in the field of Gestalt therapy are mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation. Miller said that if Gestalt therapy is to survive it must overcome seemingly inconsistent theoretical tenets and loss of precision that has resulted when people treat the theory as "a bunch of techniques and then lump it together unthinkingly with techniques derived from other therapies" (1981, p.4). In order to survive, the theory must refine and define itself to a level that distinguishes it from other theories. At present it would seem that this need has not been fulfilled in the circles of the Gestalt community and certainly not in the larger counseling community (G. Huff, personal communication November 4, 1983).

The guru days of Gestalt therapy ended with the death of Fritz Perls (M. Ward, personal communication October 13, 1988), yet many of the training institutes have adopted the concept of guruism within their walls. If the theory of Gestalt therapy is to survive, then these institutes must come together, debate and subsequently share common
theoretical threads and desist in divisive talk and pay attention to their history. The groundwork of teaching theory from the original works of Perls (1947) and Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman (1951) need to be emphasized and shared as a common occurrence in each institute. Technique can be stylized and individualized. One does not have to look like Fritz Perls to be a knowledgeable and effective Gestalt therapist anymore than one has to look like Albert Ellis to be a knowledgeable and effective Rational Emotive Therapist (Johnson, 1980).

There is both a call and a great need for increased research in the theory and the practice of Gestalt therapy. Theoretical discussion has ensued regarding "contact" (From, 1988) as well as current understanding of "awareness" (E. Polster, 1988) yet there remains aspects of the theory that are unexamined or briefly referred to in the literature as well as within this dissertation. The need for theoretical research is coupled with the need for experimental research that examines current practices of Gestalt therapy. There seems to be a need to compare current practice of Gestalt therapy with past practice of Gestalt therapy, both from a theoretical perspective as well as testing for effectiveness of the practices.

The future of Gestalt therapy seems to lie with current Gestalt therapists adequately informing students and teachers of counseling theory, that Gestalt therapy
possesses more than the empty chair or the hot seat, and offers instead a respectable theory of humankind.

Limitations of the Dissertation

A major goal of this dissertation was to provide the reader with a comprehensive document examining the major theoretical tenets of the theory of Gestalt therapy as espoused through the collection of works of its primary founder Fritz Perls. This task has been accomplished, yet limitations exist. The comprehensive nature of the dissertation could be questioned. For the purpose of workability this writer examined the theory of Gestalt therapy in relation to specified theoretical constructs. Due to the specificity of the constructs, this writer may have been unaware of other constructs worthy of analysis, and as such this represents a limitation of this dissertation.

Certainly there is room for further research on the topic using other well defined theoretical constructs. The subjectivity of historical research is acknowledged by this writer and although necessary, leaves the possibility of a limitation due to bias or phenomenological perspective in the selection of material for study.

The nature of this dissertation was necessarily broad. It was not the intent of this researcher to microscopically analyze any one aspect or theoretical construct of the
theory of Gestalt therapy but rather to report a comprehensive document to the best of this writer's ability. It would be incorrect to suggest that this dissertation contains all that could be said in reference to the historical analysis of the published works of Fritz Perls. This is particularly true in reference to the comparison of the theory of Gestalt therapy with other theoretical movements. Adequate attention to that topic would constitute a separate dissertation.

Questions arose during the analysis of the collection of Perls work that are suggestive of a need for further research. There is a need to analyze current practices in Gestalt therapy under experimental conditions. Techniques have evolved while others have declined in use often with little rationale offered in the literature. There is a need for practicing Gestalt therapists to systematically record and report their successes and failures including a record of techniques used and theoretical concentrations adopted and integrated into their practices. The historical nature of this dissertation precluded the experimental analysis of the effectiveness of techniques described by Perls. This author recognizes that studies have been conducted regarding technique, though few with Gestalt theory in mind.

It is the hope of this writer that those who read this dissertation may be stimulated to further research in the area of Gestalt therapy. Further historical, experimental
and case study research and reporting is essential to the continuation of the evolution of the Gestalt therapy movement.
CHAPTER REFERENCES


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