An International Research Conference:
The Challenge of Establishing a Research Tradition
for Gestalt Therapy
Jointly hosted by the Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy and GISC

Dates
April 17-20, 2013
Begins Wednesday, 6pm
Ends Saturday, 10am

Fee
$275 USD
GISC or AAGT Members: $225 (accommodations not included)

CE hours
14

Co-Chairs
Joseph Melnick, PhD, and Philip Brownell, MDiv, PsyD

Conference
This is a three-day, international conference designed to nurture the establishment of a research tradition for Gestalt therapy. It will address issues related to research design, exhibit current research by Gestalt practitioners, and explore research relevant to the Gestalt approach. It will feature established researchers who can stimulate and encourage those new to the field.

Keynote - Leslie Greenberg, PhD
"Noticing the Obvious" - On the importance of observation and description as a first step in research, with task analysis as a means of doing this.

Plenary Speakers
Leslie Greenberg, PhD: "Engaging in a research programme: an example of using measurement, hypothesis testing, and relating process to outcome."

Linda Finlay, PhD: "The relational approach in phenomenological research."

Ansel Woldt, EdD: "Mining for crystals - from Gestalt Q-Sort to the GIRL: Creating valid and reliable measures of Gestalt contacting processes."

Presenters & Presentations

Marlene Moss Blumenthal, PhD, The Fielding Graduate Institute, Santa Barbara, California; Administrator and Faculty Member of the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland
Title: Mother-Adolescent Daughter Conflict: Finding Common Ground through Dialogic Process. The Relationship between Gestalt Resistance, Conflict Handling Modes and Mutuality.
Category: Research Completed or In Progress
This session addresses the challenges faced by a naïve researcher who found a field of support and investigated the manner in which mother and adolescent daughter creatively adjust in the context of conflict. I entered a doctoral program just as was becoming comfortable as a practicing gestalt therapist. Research was an unknown territory and I was afraid of the challenge. I sought support. Now I wish to share my experience of working with my committee, designing the study, finding participants, collecting the data, describing the results, and using the information gleaned to inform my work as a clinician and a gestalt trainer.

Julius Burkauskas, MSc in Clinical Psychology & Laima Sapežinsksiene, PhD in Sociology; Research assistant, clinical psychologist Behavioral Medicine institute, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences
Title: Measurement of Interpersonal Power Relations Between the client/patient and the Therapist in Gestalt Therapy Session Using Metaphors
Category: Uniquely Gestalt Approaches to Research; Qualitative Methodology
Drawing on embodied cognition and perceptual symbol theories, this work is to determine interpersonal power relations between the client/patient and the therapist in Gestalt therapy sessions. The experimental method was based on theoretical assumptions of embodied cognition and the formation of perceptual symbols. These assumptions state that the thinking process depends on the perceptual stimulation, which is related to the subjective individual experience primarily in language of metaphors. Qualitative research design uses language of client/patient and therapist during gestalt therapy session. Content analysis of language is done distinguishing metaphors in vertical dimension scale of power and powerlessness.

Todd Burley, PhD, ABPP, Loma Linda University, GATLA, & Ida Babakhanyan, PhD, University of Miami
Title: A Gestalt Process Based Theory of Depression with Test Construction Validation
Category: Research completed or In Progress
Most measures of depression are based upon symptom / side-effect related measures and are not very successful in identifying depressed children. A process-description of depression based upon a phenomenologically based theory of personality is presented. The theory was then subjected to verification by constructing a theory-based scale to measure depression in children. Factor analysis yielded a three-factor solution as best fit and successfully predicted depression with a 94% hit rate in an initial normative sample. The methods used for test construction and validation data will be presented.

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Michele Cannavò, PhD, Psychiatrist, Gestalt Psychotherapist, Trainer at Istituto di Gestalt HCC Italy, President of the Italian Association for Gestalt Therapy (SIPG), Secretary at European Association for Gestalt Therapy (EAGT); Marco Lobb, PhD Business administrator in engineering and gestalt counselor; Istituto di Gestalt HCC, Italy

**Title:** Psychotherapy in the global village: gestalt therapy for organizational well being.

**Category:** Research Design; Research Currently Underway

The research project has been created by Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb and is carried out by a group of researchers of her Italian School of Psychotherapy (recognized by the Italian Minister for Universities). [2] a description of the application to organizational consulting; the phenomenological description of the team leader and the phenomenological observation of the consultant; [3] a description of the research results: how the leaders consider “gestalt” dimensions in their perceptions of working groups, how they can be helped in seeing the beauty of the groups they work with.

Linda Finlay, PhD, Integrative Psychotherapist, Academic Consultant with the Open University, UK and Visiting Professor, Novi Sad, Serbia.

**Plenary Two Presentation**

**Title:** The relational approach in phenomenological research.

**Category:** Research In Progress or Completed

In my paper, I will outline a research methodology which mirrors therapy in that it uses explicitly reflexive, embodied, relational-centred phenomenological approaches to explore lived experience. The data created in the dialogical encounter forms the basis of reflection on both self and other. The transformative power of such research arises in the way it offers individuals opportunities to be ‘witnessed’ and to ‘give voice’ to their experience. Such research resonates, challenges, and inspires new understandings. To explain this methodology I present some collaborative case study research I engaged recently with colleague and ‘Mia’ – a woman who experienced a ‘traumatic’ abortion. Referring to the emergent existential themes of ‘Feeling Torn’, ‘Cutting Shame’ and ‘Monstrous [M]Othering’, the trauma associated with abortion is found to be complex, layered and enduring. Then there is the story of an intriguing parallel process which emerged in research supervision between my colleague and myself.

Duey Freeman MA, LPC, Director: Gestalt Institute of the Rockies, Co-founder and co-director: Gestalt Equine Institute of the Rockies, Instructor: Naropa University; Joan Riger MA, LPC, Co-founder and co-director: Gestalt Equine Institute of the Rockies, Faculty: Gestalt Institute of the Rockies

**Title:** Humans, Horses, and Attachment

**Category:** Research Completed or In Progress

In this conference, we will present the Freeman Model of Attachment and Development. We will present how horses can and are willing to provide a process for which the ruptured attachment can be repaired. We will present basic equine pelvic anatomy, which is almost identical pelvic structure of a human mother. When doing mounted equine work, the non-verbal body process for both human and equine is critical towards attachment and trust. For a number of years we have kept records of treatment and outcomes. We have explored the difference between this work and the work that takes place sitting in an office. We are asking two things in this proposal. One is to present what we have, the other is to ask for creative ideas on further research and the development of this on a deeper level.

Jon Frew, PhD, ABPP, Pacific University; Gestalt Therapy Training Center Northwest; Meghann Case, PsyD, Vassar College Counseling Service, AAGT, American College Health Association, Association for University and College Counseling Center Outreach; Mark Reck, PsyD, Counseling & Psychiatry Services, University of Vermont, AAGT; Allison Chambers, MS, CACD-I, Pacific University

**Title:** Gestalt Therapy Research, Theory, and Practice: Fitting the Pieces Together with the Next Generation of Gestalt Practitioners.

**Categories:** Philosophy of Science/Research; Research Design

Establishing a research tradition for Gestalt therapy is imperative. Who will be doing the research and in what settings will this research take place? Much of the formidable task ahead will be shouldered by a “younger” generation of Gestalt therapists. One place that this research is being conducted now is at Pacific University in Portland, Oregon. Three representatives of that next generation will co present with their research mentor Jon Frew. They will discuss the topics of their research (multiculturalism, trauma, and measuring process), why they chose these topics, their methods and how they integrate their research interests with the theory of Gestalt therapy and their ongoing work with clients. Jon will comment on the unique field conditions at Pacific University that support and foster fitting the pieces–research, theory, and practice–into a coherent whole at a time when Gestalt therapy is losing its footing and ground in most graduate psychology programs in the United States.

Leslie Greenberg, PhD, York University, Toronto, Canada

**Keynote Address**

**Title:** “Noticing the obvious: The importance of observation and description as a first step in research and task analysis.”

Observation is the first step in a research sequence characterized by steps of observation, measurement, explanation and only finally prediction. I will exemplify this sequence by discussing the steps of task analysis which involves the building of rational/empirical models based on observation and conjecture as an alternative to hypothesis testing which is so often viewed as a first step in research in psychology and psychotherapy. Discovery oriented research will be contrasted with justification (validation) oriented research and the use of abduction as opposed to only induction and deduction will be discussed in discovery oriented model building. Finally the benefits of adopting a pluralistic approach to research, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods will also be discussed.
Leslie Greenberg, PhD (cont’d.)

Plenary One Presentation
Title: “Engaging in a research program: an example of using measurement, hypothesis testing, and relating process to outcome.”
I will present the development of a research programme for studying how people change in therapy. I will argue that change process research is one of the best ways of studying how people change. This approach is based on the view that to become a true applied science psychotherapy research needs not only to provide evidence of effectiveness but also to specify the processes of change that lead to the effects. After showing that a treatment is effective in producing change, change process research entails studying both general processes of change such as, the relational processes of empathy and the alliance, client depth of experience and emotional arousal, as well as specific change processes such as resolving chair dialogues for splits and unfinished business and systematic evocative unfolding for problematic reactions. Research methods for rating process to outcome, as well as task analyses of change events and the validation of models built by task analysis will be demonstrated and discussed.

Rae Johnson, PhD, Institute for Embodiment Studies; University of Toronto
Title: Engaging Strategic Curiosity—What Gestalt Therapists and Researchers Already Have in Common
Category: Research Methodology
Research is a crucial element in advancing our collective knowledge of Gestalt therapy, but therapists often struggle to engage in meaningful relationships with the research literature and the community of scholars that typically produce it. Part of the challenge in becoming more “research-oriented” is that many research methods don’t seem to match the values, skills and experiences of this unique group of psychotherapy practitioners. Gestalt therapy actually shares many qualities with some newer types of research; approaches that are gaining in popularity and credibility within the research community. Understanding these similarities can help develop an appreciation for research within the community of practitioners, support the developing expertise of researchers studying Gestalt therapy, and can help therapists clarify and refine our own clinical practice. This session is aimed at clinicians who would like to feel more comfortable with and knowledgeable about research concepts and methods.

Logan Lamprecht, PhD, Cleveland State University.
Title: Therapeutic Letter Writing as Relationally Responsive Practice—Experiences of Clients Receiving Letters During Therapy
Category: Qualitative Research Methodology
This program will help participants become familiar with current research regarding the use of therapeutic letters as an adjunct to the counseling experience. The presenter completed a qualitative study that explored the experiences of six clients who received a relationally-oriented therapeutic letter from their counselor between therapeutic sessions. Several universal themes were discovered across participant experience regarding the relationship between the letter and improved well-being. These findings will be discussed. Participants will additionally be supported in conceptualizing the letter writing process from the humanistic tradition. Come prepared to share, to have fun, and to learn an exciting way to relate to clients.

Heidi Mjelve, PhD, Norwegian Gestalt Institute in Oslo; University of Oslo
Title: Parallel processes in counselling within the field of special need education
Category: Qualitative Research Methodology; Research Completed or In Progress.
The purpose of this presentation is to [1] share some of the results of a doctoral project—in what ways parallel processes emerge/unfold in counselling relationships within the field of special needs education—based on gestalt theory and [2] spread knowledge and experience with phenomenological analysis: video observation and gained empathy through copying of the counsellor and counselee’s bodily movements when analysing the videos.

Cynthia Reynolds, PhD, Licensed Psychologist, Professor, Department of Counseling, University of Akron
Title: Coping Styles of Children of Divorce: Attitudes, Personality, and Gestalt Coping Processes
Category: Quantitative Research
This presentation will provide an overview of the previous gestalt research at Kent State University under the direction of Dr. Ansel Woldt as well as provide a description of a particular dissertation focusing on an attempt to measure the gestalt coping styles of children of divorce. The research design, gathering of data, analyses, and results will be discussed. Implications and limitations will be discussed. The research process (the benefits and challenges) will be addressed.

Jan Roubal, MD, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Science, Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. Chair of EAGT Research Committee.
Title: How psychotherapists cope with their own experiences when working with depressive patients
Category: Research Completed or In Progress
The presentation will introduce the research project, the procedure, the conclusion and the discussion of the findings. The example of concrete data analysis procedure will be presented to show the inductive way of building grounded theory. Participants will be invited to discuss each of the steps.
Pablo Herrera Salinas, PhD (candidate) in Psychotherapy Research, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile; Heidelberg University, Germany; Gestalt Institute of Santiago, Chile

Title: The Construction of a Gestalt–Coherent Outcome Measure Category: Research Completed or In Progress

Different therapeutic approaches have different therapeutic goals with patients, yet researchers frequently use the same instruments to evaluate and compare them. This means that we are not necessarily measuring what we want to change in the therapeutic processes with our patients. In this presentation, we’ll present the challenge of trying to address this gap, with the construction of a measure to evaluate the integration of patients’ main polarities. We’ll present the literature review to define the construct, an empirical qualitative research on how expert therapists “diagnose” this with their patients, and the current stages of the development of the instrument.

Daan van Baalen, MD, PhD Rector Norsk Gestaltinstitutt College, Norway.

Title: Gestalt therapy and diagnosis, a paradigmatic challenge! Category: Research Completed or In Progress (action research)

I want to show that Gestalt therapy and medical science belong to rival paradigms and that it is not possible to understand one paradigm through the conceptual framework and terminology of another rival paradigm (In The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Kuhn (1966) p. 160). How, then, can we create a diagnostic system that fits Gestalt therapy theory and is understood by medically trained personnel? Answer: we meet in praxis. I also want to show to a Gestalt diagnostic system and will indicate how students use it. Finally, together with others, I will explore the consequences in this for clinical outcome. Forming a hypothesis, we will test a diagnostic system in praxis, observe, and reflect—all of which is a form of action research.

Guadalupe Amescua Villela, PhD Director of Centro de Estudios e Investigación Gestalté, (CESIGUE) Mexico


The goal of my research is to determine the efficiency of the Cesigue Model: Relational Psychotherapy for children in comparison to the traditional model of psychotherapy for children, in terms of the effects that it has as on the intervention in children as well as in parents. I have worked with a mixed method in a comparative study, with nine families. So far my data shows, that the Cesigue Model improves the intervention with the child, but also develops parental skills, and the most important is that it develops the relationship between parents and children. There is no other literature that shows the effects of gestalt therapy with children and parents.

Ansel Woldt, EdD Professor Emeritus, Kent State University; Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy (AAGT)

Plenary Three Presentation

Title: Mining for Crystals–From Gestalt Q-Sort to the GIRL, Creating Valid and Reliable Measures of Gestalt Contacting Processes Category: Research Completed or In Progress

I will be summarizing the research efforts on Gestalt therapy contacting processes of several of the dissertations and theses I directed at Kent State University. The primary aim of this body of research was to develop valid and reliable instruments to measure the contacting processes and styles of interrupting contact, originally referred to as resistances, intrinsic to Gestalt therapy theory. Mining for crystals and the work of cleaning quartz to reveal crystal’s natural beauty, clarity and clear energy is a metaphor of the research process (methodology), the research product (measurements), and the researchers (women and men) involved in this endeavor. The first in this series of research was conducted in 1975 using Q-Sort methodology. The results of that study were sufficiently promising to lay the groundwork for a dozen or more theses and dissertations to follow to develop, refine and test the utility of such measures. Several additional dissertations and theses used these various instruments to research relationships between Gestalt contact styles, resistances and other variables. The final and most valid and reliable instrument we have created is the Gestalt Inventory of Resistance Loadings (GIRL) by Woldt, Prosnick & Kepner in 2012. The GIRL is a 100 item Likert-response-type inventory that provides measures of seven Gestalt therapy concepts commonly referred to as resistances or styles of interruption of contact, namely: Confluence, Desensitization, Introjection, Projection, Retroflection, Deflection and Egotism. A copy of the GIRL will be distributed to participants along with its developmental methodology, validity and reliability data, and scoring instructions.

Al Wong, MA, Department of Psychology. University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Title: A Guide to Conducting Case-Based, Time-Series Research in Gestalt / Emotion Focused Therapy Category: Research Design

Single-subject research designs in which patient symptoms are tracked over time have been fruitfully utilized in recent years to help elucidate the efficacy and the dynamic mechanisms of change in various therapeutic modalities. This particular research design methodology may be particularly appropriate for Gestalt / Emotion Focused Therapy, as it allows clinical practice to serve as a natural laboratory for research. Using a case-based time-series protocol, Gestalt/EFT practitioners and researchers alike may systematically test the efficacy of Gestalt/EFT techniques. This presentation is a guide to conducting empirically respectable case-based time-series studies in a laboratory or clinical practice setting.

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