Let's introduce order into Gestalt terminology:

Method, concepts and techniques, and their development

after 70 years of Gestalt psychotherapy

Mariola Paruzel-Czachura*, Institute of Psychology in Katowice

Bartosz Konieczniak, Institute of Psychology in Katowice

*Corresponding author, mariola.paruzel-czachura@us.edu.pl, Institute of Psychology,

University of Silesia in Katowice, Grazynskiego 53, Katowice, Poland

This article is under review

Abstract

Gestalt psychotherapy has been practiced by specialists from all over the world for 70 years. It is not new, yet it continues to be described with vastly varying terminology, which may result in ambiguities as well as reinforcing stereotypes about what exactly is Gestalt psychotherapy. Offering a review of selected theoretical issues, this paper proposes to organize the terminology. We focus on the technical side of psychotherapy – the article presents the phenomenological method, concepts, and main techniques used in this approach (psychodrama, body work, chair work, dream work), coming together in a full picture of what working in this approach entails. In addition, we discuss the transformation processes that Gestalt psychotherapy has gone through over the past 70 years. We emphasize that the use of techniques alone is not yet equivalent to conducting psychotherapy in the Gestalt approach, especially considering that the primary conditions necessary for such a therapy to occur are: contact with a holistically perceived client, an increased awareness (including body), and working in keeping with the principle of here and now. Analyzing the terminology used in relation to Gestalt psychotherapy leads us to the conclusion that the toolset of a gestaltist is grounded in the following factors: the phenomenological method, the concepts of Gestalt psychotherapy that are strongly associated with that method, and the techniques consistent with these concepts. We posit that using these categories (i.e., the method, concepts, and techniques) introduces much-needed order into the theoretical framework of Gestalt psychotherapy.

Keywords: Gestalt psychotherapy, phenomenological method, the empty chair technique, body work, psychodrama

> The basics concepts of Gestalt therapy are either misunderstood or simply not known. Gestalt therapy is neither a particular technique nor a collection of specific techniques. Thus, it is not an encounter or confrontation method with a structured sequence of directions, demands and challenges. It is also not a dramatic-expressive method aimed primarily at the discharge of tension. Tension is energy, and energy is too costly a commodity to be simply discharged; it must be made available for making the necessary or desirable changes. The task of therapy is to develop sufficient support for the reorganization and re-channeling the energy. (Laura Perls, 1992a, p. 51)

In this paper we aim to sort out the terminology pertaining to Gestalt psychotherapy, which has been practiced by psychotherapists the world over for nearly 70 years. In spite of its age, it continues to be described with vastly varying terminology, likely causing ambiguities to arise as well as reinforcing stereotypes about the topic (What exactly is Gestalt psychotherapy?). We review the existing literature on the subject, demonstrating the variety of terminology used to discuss the practice in this approach, and propose a way to describe Gestalt psychotherapy using three major categories: method, concepts, and techniques. An additional purpose of this article is to review the main changes that have transformed Gestalt psychotherapy over the past 70 years.

Gestalt psychotherapy was officially founded in 1951, when Fritz Perls, Paul Goodman, and Ralph Hefferline published their famous *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality.* The approach came to life in opposition to psychoanalysis, in which its creators were trained[1]. Perls is generally considered the originator of the Gestalt school of psychotherapy[2], even though he repeatedly stressed that he had not created Gestalt psychotherapy but merely rediscovered what had already been known since antiquity (Perls, 1969a). Perls was inspired not only by psychoanalysis (and in this area both by Sigmund

Freud and by subsequent generations of psychotherapists such as Karen Horney, who was one of his psychotherapists[3]), but also by Gestalt psychology (Emerson & Smith, 1974), as well as by philosophy – phenomenology, existentialism, and the Eastern thought in particular (Steward, 1974). In her doctoral thesis, Paruzel-Czachura (2015) reviewed the philosophical foundations of Gestalt psychotherapy – those familiar to its creators and those unfamiliar to them, although strongly associated with this approach. Perls's undoubted achievement (1973a) was the fact that he combined all the loose elements into a unified system, creating a new psychotherapeutic approach. Its development was also greatly influenced by the work of Fritz's wife, Laura Perls, although she drew more inspiration from philosophy and art[4]; she also proposed that Gestalt psychotherapy be simply called existential psychotherapy; according to Serlin and Shane (1999), back then the term was not used for the purposes of any other approach. Laura focused on relationships and support rather than independence (Serlin, 1992), which was her husband's domain.

Since its foundation, as every approach, Gestalt psychotherapy has undergone many transformations, also in the area of its method and techniques (Brownell, 2016; Roubal, 2016; Yontef, 1992b). There are currently several dozen Gestalt therapy institutes worldwide, located on different continents (Yontef & Jacobs, 2008), and researchers are still investigating its effectiveness (Raffagnino, 2019; Brownell, 2016; Janowski & Biedrycka, 2014; Strümpfel, 2006). For many years now, it has also been used for counseling (Passons, 1975). The creators of the approach wrote relatively little about theory (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951; Perls, 1969a, 1969b, 1969c, 1970, 1973a, 1973b, 1975a, 1975b, 1978)[5], and their followers more often focused on practice than on developing theoretical ideas. As a result, there is terminological confusion, which many authors have lamented for a long time (Latner, 1986) and which it is our task to elaborate on and offer solutions to.

In summary, we propose to use the categories of method, concepts, and techniques when discussing Gestalt psychotherapy. The purpose of this article is to present an overview of the information available on the approach, covering the time span from its inception until the present day. In the first part, we describe the phenomenological *method* of Gestalt psychotherapy, together with the accompanying *concepts*, the approach to the client, and the accepted ways of working with the client. The second part presents psychotherapeutic *techniques* which, as we emphasize, do not as such constitute Gestalt psychotherapy; only a combination of methods, concepts, and techniques gives grounds to define the therapeutic process in this approach. In the third and final part of the article, we describe the crucial transformations of the approach in recent years.

Method

We reviewed only literature directly about Gestalt psychotherapy approach. We started analyzes from all classical books and chapters written by Perls and his collaborators, then we analyzed books, chapters and articles of later authors, including practical psychotherapists and Gestalt theoretical works written by non-psychotherapists. All literature is included in the reference list, we considered only English and Polish literature and only published scientific works, no media publications, working papers or psychotherapeutics blogs etc. As there is not a lot of publications about Gestalt psychotherapy, we were able to analyze them all and include main findings from them in this paper. Sometimes, we cited only one of a few possible publications of one author, and it is because in other publications the author used the same terminology. We used Google Scholar, Research Gate and PsycARTICLES when looking for the latest works in this area. Our key words were: Gestalt, Gestalt therapy, Gestalt psychotherapy, Perls. We finished the literature search on the 1st of December in 2019.

Variations in Terminology

The literature on the subject is a source of various distinctions and terms used to describe the work of the Gestalt therapist. The researchers have employed the following: techniques (Mann, 2010), basics concepts, techniques and experimentation (Yontef & Jacobs, 2008), styles (Laura Perls, 1992a), Gestalt concepts (Ginger, 2007), rules and games (Mellibruda, 2009), specific standards and original techniques (Grzesiuk, 2006), therapeutic methods and tools (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993), and two approaches: the use of the phenomenological method and the use of specific intervention methods (Sills, Fish, & Lapworth, 1995). An interesting division was proposed by Claudio Naranjo (2000), who divided the techniques by the purpose they serve: *suppression techniques*, which serve to inhibit the behaviors that clients use to avoid experiencing; *expression techniques*, which help clients use their energy to increase self-awareness (for example by exaggerating and repeating certain movements); and *integration techniques*, which help clients integrate their personalities. Naranjo also developed the famous nine injunctions characteristic of the Gestalt approach, such as: "Live now . . . Live here . . . Stop imagining. Experience the real . . . Take full responsibility" (Naranjo, 1970, pp. 49–50). Descriptions of a gestaltist's work without any of the above divisions are also present in the literature (Enright, 1970).

The above listed ideas are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary: together, they afford a look at the Gestalt psychotherapist's experience from various angles, leading to a fuller understanding of what working in this approach actually entails. At the same time, the literature lacks a study that would focus on analyzing the terms used, even though such an analysis could be helpful in organizing knowledge about Gestalt psychotherapy, which would be of particular significance for those who have only recently developed an interest in this approach. This article aims to fill that gap. We have concluded that the Gestalt practitioner's work comprises three factors: the phenomenological *method*, which is linked to the *concepts* of Gestalt psychotherapy, and *techniques* consistent with these concepts. These terms best

convey the essence of working in this approach, since they are the most common in the reference literature and because they describe it in the most holistic way. Even though the Gestalt approach is usually discussed in the context of its techniques and concepts, we will begin by explaining the phenomenological method, which is the foundation and the starting point for the techniques and concepts, and which explains that working in this approach entails working with the phenomenon – with what appears.

The Phenomenological Method

The discussed approach relies primarily on the method based on phenomenology, a philosophy whose father is considered to be Edmund Husserl (1931). Phenomenology was creatively adapted for the psychotherapeutic process by Perls, his wife Laura, and their associates. Gestalt practitioners use the phenomenological method of examination in which they describe what they see without making any interpretations or drawing any conclusions. The phenomenological method and its philosophical assumptions were described in detail by Bloom (2019, 2009) and Paruzel-Czachura (2015), so it will not be discussed at length here. The Gestalt psychotherapist tries to avoid interpretations and analyses, assuming that they are merely a mental game, a trap that leads to intellectual insight only, with an endless vicious circle of *why* questions, rather than to experience and awareness, which are the goal of Gestalt psychotherapy (Naranjo, 2000). Yontef and Jacobs (2008) clearly emphasize that the sole goal of psychotherapy is awareness. To help clients achieve it, Perls often urged therapists to abandon the *why?* question for the *what?* and *how?* questions. He claimed that the *why?* question encouraged the clients to intellectualize and seek rationalization instead of exploring their own phenomenology (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993). In contrast, the *what?* and *how?* questions help the clients increase their awareness of the current field and understand themselves, creating a possibility for a change to occur. This is referred to as the consciousness continuum. Somehow reinforcing this perspective, Ginger (2007) claims that

the term *now and how* more accurately reflects the Gestalt procedure than the popular expression *here and now*. According to him, *now and how* puts additional emphasis on the phenomenological aspect of Gestalt psychotherapy, highlighting the fact that it is more concerned with *how* than with *why*, thus prioritizing the description of phenomena over explaining them.

The phenomenological method involves the use of what is referred to as transcendental reduction (Gr. εποχή), which means adopting an attitude of no presuppositions and bracketing theoretical knowledge in order to experience the therapeutic process *here and now* and to experience the client as a person. Phenomenology uses the techniques of eidetic reduction, which makes it possible to access what is important: the essence of things. Phenomenology begins in silence, rejecting the luring charm of language; it promotes a contemplative attitude and openness to experience.

By all means, despite the general acceptance of the phenomenological method in the Gestalt approach, psychotherapists use many theoretical terms to refer to certain phenomena, processes, and client characteristics. The main point, however, is that – when in contact with the client – they try to apply this method, temporarily putting aside all theories, terms, and concepts in order to improve the relation with the client and provide him or her with genuine support. Thus, the phenomenological method provides a firm basis for therapeutic practice in the Gestalt approach. The approach itself makes use of certain concepts, described below, which are attempts at explaining its key features and notions.

Concepts of Gestalt Psychotherapy

Gestalt psychotherapy is characterized not only by the phenomenological method, but also by basic concepts that reflect the direction of practice following this approach. The literature on the subject includes various descriptions of these concepts, one of the most detailed descriptions being provided by Sills, Fish, and Lapworth (1995). According to these

authors, the principles of the Gestalt approach are associated with concepts such as: awareness, holism, responsibility, satisfaction of needs, human value, here and now, interconnectedness, figure-ground, closure, and self-regulation. We are slightly modifying their proposal, reducing the number of terms to seven. When describing psychotherapy, Perls himself did not indicate any specific number of terms when discussing psychotherapy. His way of writing was rather unstructured (Perls, 1969c); he also admitted that writing was a challenge for him, which is why he invited Goodman, among others, to collaborate on the book (Perls, 1969c).

Holism

Holism seems to be the key term in Gestalt psychotherapy. The very word *Gestalt* is of German origin and means whole. It also implies that this whole is something other than a sum of its parts, and that the whole loses its properties as a whole each time it is dismantled into individual elements (Latner, 1986; Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993). Such a whole in Gestalt therapy is, for instance, the human being, which makes the holistic view of man an extremely significant element of this approach. Perls emphasized that man was a whole that could not be separated into body and mind. Somewhat in opposition to psychoanalysis, he believed that there was no point in working on an isolated part of the human being, that is, by only listening to what the patient is saying and putting it under scrutiny. In Gestalt, what is important is to perceive the client as a whole, including his or her thoughts, emotions, and body, and also his or her relationship with the environment. Although perceived as a whole, individuals are also composed of certain opposites (such as the stupid self and the wise self, the beautiful self and the ugly self, the happy self and the sad self, the self that should do something and the self that wants something else, etc.), yet sometimes fail to acknowledge both polarities and describe themselves through the lens of only one of them. The therapist defines such a situation as a disease. The idea of opposites refers to the Eastern concept of *yin* and *yang*,

which come together in a unified *tao*. In each person there are also two other opposites, which Perls referred to as the topdog and the underdog. The topdog is a source of various orders and duties which the underdog should obey and observe, suppressing its spontaneity. The topdog is fair but also authoritarian and administers severe punishments. This is also the part that decides, among other things, that something should be done, that it should be done in such and such way. The underdog acts as an order-taker and a slave, although it can sometimes express its opinions, which leads to internal conflict.

A riveting description of the Gestalt therapist's work was provided by John B. Enright, who said: "The general strategy of Gestalt therapy does not depend on the patient's accuracy in self-report. We simply tell him, in effect, to sit down and start living, then note where and how he fails" (Enright, 1970, p. 113). This is a simple way of explaining that Gestalt psychotherapy is about focusing on the whole and on experience, not about analyzing individual elements of a person and making unnecessary interpretations.

Awareness (Figure-ground)

To a great extent, Gestalt psychotherapy consists in working on the client's awareness (Perls, 1978). The therapist pays attention not only to what the client says, but also (and perhaps even above all) to *how* he or she says it: the tone of voice, posture, gestures, facial expressions, or muscle movements. During a therapeutic session, the client gets an opportunity to become aware of matters related not only to his or her thinking but also to the body and emotions. Awareness is the full realization of one's experience (cf. Sills, Fish, & Lapworth, 1995, p. 29), that is, a process linked to the spheres of reason, emotions, and the body. Perls believed that simply recognizing the problem together with the areas that need work was a big step in psychotherapy and often referred to awareness itself as therapeutic (Perls, 1969a, 1973a). Another key element in the Gestalt therapeutic approach is the notion of figure and ground (and the field theory associated with it), derived from Gestalt

psychology[6]. Figure stands for what is important, while ground is what is irrelevant. Both perception of the world and motivation are based on a simple principle: people focus on what is important and work to satisfy the needs in this area, so eventually these needs become the background, giving space to new needs. Even though the matter of satisfying needs appears to be trivially simple, psychotherapists' experience shows that clients display many disorders in this area; for instance, they can be unaware of their figures, unable to express them, or unable to close them (by satisfying their needs), which results in the next figure being blocked. Working on awareness is the foundation for figure recognition and successful closure.

Here and Now

Focusing on the present – on the *here and now* – is another key concept of Gestalt psychotherapy (Naranjo, 2000; Sills, Fish, & Lapworth, 1995). Staying in the present helps clients increase their self-awareness, which is why they are asked to always use the present tense. This also applies to describing past experiences (including dreams) or fantasies about the future. Thanks to this principle, people are able to find out how much they avoid contact with the present and how difficult it is to remain in the *here and now*. As a result, "patients become aware of the measures they take to protect themselves against the real, current awareness" (Grzesiuk, 2006, p. 499). Working in the present does not mean, however, that the past or the future are not important. On the contrary, they can still be present in people's current memories and plans, hopes, or anxieties (Perls, 1969a). However, perceiving the past and the future through the lens of the present supports the therapeutic process and the client's effort towards growth.

Contact and Contact Boundary

Following Buber's philosophy of dialogue, the creator of Gestalt psychotherapy emphasized that the therapist's contact with the client aims at the I–Thou level rather than the I–It level (Perls, 1969a, 1975b). For this reason, the discussed approach increasingly often

uses the word client instead of patient in order to emphasize the equality between the person undergoing therapy and the therapist. In addition, the type of contact regarded as optimal is the one referred to as contact boundary (or, simply, setting a contact boundary), which – in contrast to isolation, distance, excessive intimacy, or symbiosis – is the result of people treating each genuinely and respecting each other's autonomy. This type of contact brings together two people who respect each other's privacy and boundaries. Perls used to say that this is a relationship in which "you are you and I am I" (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993, p. 102) – a real, honest encounter between Me and You. A famous example of a genuine and autonomous relationship is the so-called Perls Prayer[7]. It describes the type of contact between the therapist and the client that should be sought in the therapeutic process. Writing about the work of the Gestalt counselor, Sills, Fish, and Lapworth (1995) claim that such a person is not setting off to change the clients, but to meet them where they currently are, and to encourage them to expand the boundaries of their habitual ways of existing through experimentation (cf. p. 98). An important term in the Gestalt approach is the cycle of contact (cycle of experience); the simplest version of this cycle consists of the following stages: awareness, excitement, action, and contact (Wagner-Moore, 2004, p. 181). In a well-functioning individual, the cycle has a beginning and an end, and if cycle disturbances occur, Gestalt psychotherapy helps to identify the problem and restore harmony. Disturbances to the cycle are associated with mechanisms of contact withdrawal, which Perls derived from psychoanalysis. The mechanisms include desensitization, introjection, deflection, and retroflection (Paruzel-Czachura, 2015). The various types of the cycle and its stages were discussed by Mann (2010, pp. 36–38); two types are the most popular: *the Awareness–Excitement–Contact Cycle* (Zinker, 1977) and *the Cycle of Gestalt Formation and Deconstruction* (Clarkson, 1989).

The Client is The Expert. The Client is Free

In the Gestalt perspective, the therapist is not considered an expert; the clients know themselves best and are to learn from the therapist while the therapist learns from them. The clients can take on any problem that they find relevant. "The psychotherapist has no right to decide that the problem raised by the patient should not become the topic of therapeutic work" (Grzesiuk, 2006, p. 500). Of course, the therapist does guide and support the clients, but does not give them any advice or instructions. The modern Gestalt therapists are not directive; they do not know the answers to all of the clients' questions, and even if they see what could be good for them, they wait for the moment when the clients arrive at that conclusion themselves. The clients will only take the responsibility for their choices if they make them themselves. The clients are as free as any human being. Even if they choose not to choose, this is also their choice. Existentialism emphasizes that people are condemned to freedom (Sartre, 2007).

The Client is Responsible for Change

According to Perls, one of the main criteria a person must meet in order to be called genuine and fulfilled is responsibility, which manifests itself in making independent choices, but also in the language used by the client. That is why in Gestalt psychotherapy attention is paid to the semantic side of the communication. Clients often try to distance themselves from their feelings, their body, or their behavior, for example by using impersonal phrasing instead of the personal *I*. This allows them to shift the responsibility for what they do or feel on to agents such as fate, parents, or force majeure. In such cases, the therapist usually asks the client to change the phrasing, which helps the client to "see himself as an active subject rather than a passive object with various things 'happening to him'" (Mellibruda, 2009, p. 53). The words *You* or *We* are replaced with *I*; *I can't* is replaced with *I don't want to*; *I must* with *I choose*; and *I know* with *I imagine.* In the Gestalt approach it is recommended to use I-statements in communication (e.g., When you say so, I feel terrible) rather than You-

statements (e.g., You are terrible). People are also responsible for their emotions, although sometimes it is easier for them to transfer the responsibility for what they feel to others (it is preferred to say: I am responsible for the feeling of anger, I decide about it, even if you did something to me that I did not want, instead of: You make me feel angry). Furthermore, in the Gestalt approach every emotion is considered important and necessary; for instance, fear can mark an important step forward (Perls, 1969b), anger sends a signal that something is going wrong in one's life and can motivate the individual to change their ways, and aggression is central to setting boundaries (Perls, 1975b).

Internal Support

The criterion for being a mature human being is the transition from environmental support to self-support, or from external to internal support (Perls, 1969a; Naranjo, 2000). Perls believed that during their lives people developed different methods (or, as he called them – games) to receive environmental support. He claimed that one of such methods was to ask questions. People "play stupid" (Perls, 1969a, p. 53) so that someone else (in a counseling situation this would be the therapist) tells them exactly what to do and how to do it; they want detailed, step-by-step instructions (Perls, 1969a). Therefore, Perls discouraged his clients from asking any questions and asked them to transform these questions into affirmative sentences. In this way they had to take responsibility for what they really wanted to say. No advice or specific guidelines are given by the counselor. The clients must find strength and solutions in themselves. This approach is also rooted in the paradoxical theory of change, which says: "Change occurs when one becomes what he is, not when he tries to become what he is not" (Beisser, 1970, p. 77). According to this philosophical, Eastern approach to change, only if one loves oneself and accepts one's weaknesses, is one open to a lasting change.

In summary, Gestalt psychotherapy is designed to help clients increase self-awareness and self-acceptance. A very important assumption of the Gestalt approach is that people solve

their life problems properly if they are able to use their energy and abilities, and if they know who they are. The therapist's task is to help the clients increase their self-awareness and to re-assimilate the energy they expend on behaviors that limit their stream of consciousness. Once this has been achieved, psychotherapy comes to an end (Enright, 1970). Thus, Gestalt psychotherapy is composed primarily of the phenomenological method and the basic concepts described above. However, the most characteristic component of the approach is the techniques, explained in the next part of the article, although they are, in some measure, complementary to the method and concepts rather than the key part of the therapeutic process.

Gestalt is Not its Techniques

Before introducing and discussing individual techniques used in Gestalt psychotherapy, let us clearly emphasize that psychotherapeutic practice in this approach is not a set of techniques. When used thoughtlessly, the techniques become merely gimmicks that can harm the client instead of contributing to the therapeutic process (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993). The problem of understanding this type of psychotherapy through the lens of its techniques alone has existed from the very beginning (Yontef & Simkin, 1989; Perls, 1969a). Perls himself took note of therapists who applied his techniques and experiments without comprehension, promising immediate recovery, instant help, and miraculously fast and effective therapy (Perls, 1969a). These counselors tried to emulate the Gestalt approach without understanding its concepts and ideas, which had no therapeutic value. Although the founder of Gestalt psychotherapy claimed that he never used any specific techniques, he did in fact quite often repeat the same experiments with different clients. In retrospect, it can be seen that his therapeutic practice sometimes contradicted that no-technique claim (Perls, 1969a). This shows, however, that Perls did not aim at establishing specific techniques that could be taught to others; he simply did what he thought was the most effective in a given therapeutic situation. Clarkson's words capture the point well: "A true Gestalt therapist does

not base himself or herself on the techniques of Perls or of any other therapist but abhors technique or gimmicks devoid of understanding" (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993, pp. 227–228). Other psychotherapists seem to have a similar outlook on the matter (Yontef & Jacobs, 2008), emphasizing the role of creativity in the use of techniques and stressing that the psychotherapist should be careful to choose the right moment to apply each of them.

Techniques of Gestalt Psychotherapy

Gestalt counselors often work with clients using *experiments*. These are various techniques and games that allow clients to explore and discover themselves in an experimental (experiential) way. Yontef and Jacobs (2008) proposed the following division of techniques: focusing exercises, enactment, creative expression, mental experiments, guided fantasy, imagery, and body awareness. In this article, we propose a different categorization model, although all types of techniques distinguished by Yontef and Jacobs are used in the techniques we discuss, namely in psychodrama, dream work, chair work, and body work. The techniques we propose are combinations of the specific actions listed above. And thus: exercises related to *focusing* consist in focusing on a selected aspect, movement, word, awareness, figure, and other elements. *Enactment* is about playing a role, saying certain words to someone, and sharing emotions; *creative expression* (through writing, drawing, dancing, movement, etc.) is classified under enactment. *Mental experiments* are associated with visualization, imagining a place or a situation – this is also where *guided fantasy* and *imagery* are used. The psychotherapist creatively supports the client's development using these techniques. Lastly, we have retained *body awareness* in this set of working techniques under the name of *body work*.

Psychodrama

One of the most important and most widely known experiments used by Gestalt psychotherapists is psychodrama. There is some inconsistency in the literature regarding this

concept. Some sources say that Perls openly admitted to having been inspired by the work of Jacob Moreno, at the same time emphasizing that he had largely transformed this technique, in fact creating a new method. At the same time, other sources say that psychodrama was founded on theater and dance, including Rudolf Steiner's eurythmy movement art and the expressionist dance developed by Rudolf von Laban and Mary Wigman (Perls worked in a theater and his wife was trained in dance), and that Moreno's works were little known to the Perlses (Sterlin, 1992).

While Moreno suggested that people in a therapeutic group play different parts related, for example, to a client's unfinished business, Perls found it much more useful to have the client act all the parts by themselves (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993). He claimed that when other group members are requested to play a part, they bring their own fantasies and their own interpretations into the process. "I let the patient play all these parts, because only by really playing can you get the full identification, and the identification is the counteraction to the alienation", he explained (Perls, 1969a, p. 143). The creator of Gestalt psychotherapy claimed that people had a tendency to alienate something – that is, to push it out or throw it out of their personality. In this approach, psychodrama is a tool used precisely for clients to become aware of the matters they alienate, to recognize them as theirs, and to re-assimilate them, thus regaining some of the lost potential (Perls, 1969a). By using this technique, clients can play any part – from various aspects of themselves, themselves in different situations, through acting as other people or things, to enacting abstract concepts and ideas. Perls appreciated this technique in particular when working with dreams. Introducing such a significant modification to psychodrama, Perls was also forced to find a way to facilitate the client's enactment of different personas. The method serving that purpose is referred to as chair work.

Chair Work

This psychotherapeutic technique, also known as the empty chair or two-chair technique, is one of the most commonly used in Gestalt psychotherapy. Numerous studies have been conducted on its effectiveness, described and commented on by Wagner-Moore (2004), Brownell (2016), and others. Working with a chair allows the client to start a dialogue, for example between himself or herself and another character, or between various aspects of his or her own personality. Each time the speaker changes, the client moves to the chair that was assigned a given part. The literature identifies three possible situations in which using this technique is helpful: conflict (e.g., to have children or not), subject-object separation (e.g., I vs. my mother), and attribution separation (e.g., when one attributes conflicting features to oneself, such as beautiful vs. ugly) (Greenberg, Elliott, & Lietaer, 1994). Kellogg (2004) describes various contexts for chair work using the following terms: (a) external dialogue (an unresolved situation from the past, e.g., involving someone else), this also includes all farewells to real or imaginary characters; (b) internal dialogue (an internal conflict, two polarities, e.g., the inner critic and the inner child), which includes working with introjection, retroflection, and making life decisions; and (c) an approach that combines the internal with the external, that is, the corrective approach that involves working with schemas (which are all gestalts, according to Kellogg), associated mainly with cognitive behavioral therapy, but with extra emphasis placed on the significance of working on emotions; for example, the previous scheme "sits" on one chair, while the modification of the scheme, developed during therapeutic work, takes a seat on the other chair.

Joseph Zinker writes about this technique as follows: "The empty chair experiment gives the person an opportunity to take ownership of opposing forces within himself and to integrate them creatively. The empty chair allows the person to come into dialogue with a polarity within himself" (Zinker, 1977, p. 150). Discovering your opposites and polarities is crucial for Gestalt psychotherapy (Latner, 1986). Perls emphasized that the most common

polarity was the so-called topdog vs. underdog. The topdog is the authoritarian side in a person, using statements such as *you should* or *you must*. Perls used the term of *shouldism* to refer to the philosophy and attitude presented by this polarity (Perls, 1970). The underdog is a person's manipulative side, submissive and apologetic, repeating *I keep trying* or *it is not my fault that I fail*. Both of these sides fight with each other to gain control over the person, playing the "topdog/underdog game" or the "self-torture game" (Perls, 1970, p. 13) and, according to Perls, the awareness of this conflict is the first step towards integrating these two parts. This integration, in turn, will make it possible to re-assimilate the energy and potential that, until that moment, were allocated to the conflict (Perls, 1969a). The empty chair technique can also help the client solve unfinished business, for example by enabling them to interview their deceased parents. The active approach, which this technique undoubtedly involves, allows you to express yourself more directly (and hence better) than when simply talking about an unfinished business (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993). Zinker draws attention to another aspect of the usefulness of this technique: "The empty chair is used frequently because it is an effective device for reclaiming what one has unwittingly disowned and for learning to nourish oneself with something which originally seemed difficult, painful, repugnant" (Zinker, 1977, p. 150). Kellogg (2004), moreover, points out many similarities of this technique to cognitive-behavioral therapy, emphasizing the effectiveness of chair work.

Body Work

Since Gestalt psychotherapy promotes a holistic outlook on people, expressive movement is one of its key elements (Stevens, 1975; Kepner, 1997). Holism means monism – the understanding that one is the body rather than merely has the body. For instance, Perls asked clients to dance out their feelings or show them using movement or intensification of movement (e.g., hitting the knee with the hand harder and harder). Movement, dance or creative expression through various means (e.g., drawing) can help the clients stimulate their

individual creativity, increase the level of vitality, and gain more awareness of their bodies (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993). Zinker (1977) greatly values creative expression and eagerly incorporates drawing[8], listening to music, and sculpting in the process of therapy. According to him, the creative process leads to a release of energy, which often seems frozen and inaccessible at first. Zinker combines the creative process with exercises increasing the clients' self-awareness, such as movement or breathing exercises. Body work, movement, dance, and creative expression all allow the client to gain genuine experience, beyond *talking* about feelings or sensations. Direct self-expression, without words, which are intermediaries themselves, opens the client to increased self-awareness and expression in its purest form. Paruzel-Czachura and Konieczniak (2019) discussed the positive effects of body work in Gestalt therapy from the perspective of experimental psychological research. Meditation and yoga are also in harmony with this technique, for its creators were inspired by Eastern philosophy, particularly by Zen (Paruzel-Czachura, 2015). Modern researchers continue to study the positive outcomes of meditation and yoga in the process of psychotherapy (looking for validation in control group experiments), although in Gestalt these methods have been used for many years (Seppälä, Nitschke, Tudorascu, Hayes, Goldstein, Nguyen, Shariff, Tracy, & Markusoff, 2012; van der Kolk, Stone, West, Rhodes, Emerson, Suvak, & Spinazzola, 2014; Cuddy, 2016).

Body work (or work on establishing contact with the body) in Gestalt psychotherapy can be divided into the following types: working with breathing, with voice (e.g., shouting out certain words), with body posture, and with the way of walking or standing, repeating certain movements made spontaneously by the client which seemed significant to the therapist (e.g., hit the table again, and then once more or several times more; the psychotherapist then asks the client, what that particular movement meant for him instead of providing him with a ready-made interpretation). The list of body work exercises should also include becoming

mindful about the *here and now* sensations coming from the body (e.g., What do I feel in my body now? Does anything hurt?), screening off certain senses (e.g., by closing one's eyes or plugging one's ears), finding out where particular emotions are located in the body (e.g., Do I feel aggression in clenched fists, clenched jaws or maybe in my legs?), relaxation through a combination of breath work and visualization, meditation, yoga, and simply paying attention to the body—taking care of it, providing it with adequate exercise, nutrition, rest, etc. In addition, there is also room for physical contact between the psychotherapist and the client— taking the form of a handshake, brushing, stroking, patting on the back, etc., with due respect to the ethical principles of psychotherapy. Current research confirms what psychotherapists were already aware of 70 years ago, namely the fact that a restful, relaxed state translates into increased optimism, greater emotional control, reduced anxiety, aggression, depression, better coping with pain and addiction, and better work and academic achievement (Bhasin, Dusek, Chang, Joseph, Denninger, Fricchione, Benson, & Liebermann, 2013).

Dream Work

The founder of Gestalt psychotherapy believed that dreams were of special significance (Perls, 1970; Perls, 1969a). He claimed that dreams were the most spontaneous expressions of human existence and could be an existential message people received from themselves. He also emphasized that all aspects of a dream were a projection of the dreamer's self-aspects. While working with the client on her dream, the Gestalt counselor may use psychodrama, owing to which the client will be able to embody the things she dreams of. Consequently, this helps the client identify them as alienated items, which can be later reintegrated and re-assimilated. When working with dreams, it is crucial to ask the client to report the dream in the present tense – this helps the client to become more involved with the contents of the dream (Mellibruda, 2009). Ginger (2007) made interesting comments about the practice of working with dreams occurring in the aftermath of traumatic events. He

recommends beginning the work with the client directly after the accident, even before difficult dreams begin to appear, calling it "the Gestalt emergency service" (Ginger, 2007, p. 92). The most interesting records of Perls's therapeutic dialogues on dream work can be found in *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim* (1969). According to Perls, dream work is most fruitful in the case of nightmares or frequently recurring dreams.

The Development of Gestalt Psychotherapy

Like any other school of psychotherapy, Gestalt psychotherapy has been developing and evolving from the very beginning of its existence. This is a natural process stemming, among other things, from the simple observation that the world around us is transforming as well. This is not without significance for people, because the challenges and threats they face are constantly changing as well. Psychotherapy evolves naturally when students continue the founder's thought and ideas, which often means introducing new elements and removing or modifying the old ones. Naranjo (2000) also presents two very specific reasons why Gestalt psychotherapy changed. Firstly, at the time this approach was created, it was a revolutionary movement. In the final years of Perls's life and after his death, this approach began to become increasingly popular and recognized all over the world. Gestalt psychotherapy has penetrated into culture (as opposed to counter-culture, from which this trend arose); it is taught at universities and applied in business (Ginger, 2007; Paruzel-Czachura & Konieczniak, 2019). Naranjo emphasizes that this process – which he refers to as institutionalization – has undoubtedly improved the teaching of Gestalt psychotherapy, although he also believes that it is worth considering whether the adoption of psychospiritual values by companies and by society in general does not mean compromising or diluting the essence of the therapeutic process itself. Below, we present some key areas of transformation in Gestalt psychotherapy.

Recipients of Therapy

While in the initial phase of the Gestalt approach psychotherapy was addressed to people with neurosis, who were willing to work on self-development and liberate themselves from introjections, in the course of its development it became more frequently used as a tool for working with mentally disturbed individuals, e.g., people suffering from psychosis, traumas, or personality disorders. Furthermore, although Gestalt psychotherapy was originally addressed to adults, its recipients nowadays have come to include children and young people as well (Levi, 2013). Spagnuolo Lobb (2013) describes the transformation of therapy clients in a very interesting way. She explains that from the 1950s until the 1970s patients were striving for freedom, liberation from family ties, and dignity; from the 1970s until the 1990s, the more frequent issues included problems in intimate relationships, seeking liberation in substance abuse, and the need to establish contact with a group first and then to discover oneself on one's own – a general search for identity. Recent years are characterized by fluidity and by greater absence of parents and family in childhood and then in adulthood (with relationships transferred into the virtual realm). This can lead to problems in building lasting relationships with family and friends, issues in sexual relations, anxiety, and a sense of uncertainty. In summary, nowadays Gestalt psychotherapists work with people of different ages, both short-term and long-term, both in private practices and in public psychiatric hospitals (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993; Houston, 2003; Latner, 1986).

Non-directiveness

Undoubtedly, one of the most conspicuous changes in the manner of conducting psychotherapy is its non-directiveness, which Wagner-Moore (2004) defines as a softening or leaning towards the Rogerian approach; however, the followers of the New York school, which Laura Perls was associated with (1992b), disagree with this, highlighting that more emphasis is placed on the therapist's role in supporting contact and building the relationship with the client (i.e., on the contact boundary) than on directedness towards the client, as is the

case in Rogerian psychotherapy. Nowadays, in some way in opposition to Perls, the psychotherapist should always ask the client if he or she wants to do the proposed exercise or perform a given experiment or if he or she feels comfortable playing a given part. The directive character of Perls's work is described, for instance, by Clarkson and Mackewn (1993, pp. 228–229), and the sources of information about his practice include video footage of his therapeutic sessions. This change is grounded in the belief that taking a specific action, or making the decision not to, allows the client to take full responsibility for himself, his actions, and the process of psychotherapy itself. It is also based on one of the principles of Gestalt psychotherapy, which sees the client and the counselor as equals. Consequently, if the psychotherapist is not an expert, he should not impose exercises or experiments on his client that he considers best in a given situation. Based on his knowledge and experience, however, the psychotherapist can offer such activities to the client, leaving it for the client to decide whether or not to engage in it.

Style of Work

Identifying the Gestalt approach to therapy with Perls's style of work in the final years of his life is problematic, because it may result in a distorted view of what Gestalt psychotherapy is. The founder of this approach admitted that he was constantly trying to simplify the theory behind it, or at least the language used to describe it, so that it was comprehensible for all. At the same time, hoping to popularize his approach as widely as possible, in the final years of his life Perls was indeed focused on working to quickly obtain theatrical effects. Although he managed to achieve his goal – his demonstrative workshops gained immense popularity and attracted people from all over the world – his approach unfortunately had a negative effect as well. Many workshop participants imitated Perls's theatrical style of work without having his knowledge and his scrupulous observation skills. As a consequence, they often did people harm instead of helping them. Perls noticed this

tendency and openly condemned the style of work he himself had promoted (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993). This is the reason why in today's Gestalt psychotherapy the value of theory is emphasized more strongly than it used to be in Perls's time. The style of work has also changed for most practitioners—evolving from the theatrical, "Perlsian" style to one based on intense, individualized work and dialogue aimed at bringing about a lasting change.

Group Psychotherapy

Perls frequently worked with an individual against the backdrop of a therapeutic group (Perls, 1975a), and treated group therapy as an exception, although the balance between individual and group work varied depending on the period in his professional life (Perls, 1970). Today, some psychotherapists emphasize the significance of individual work when discussing what is known as Gestalt relational psychotherapy (Yontef & Jacobs, 2008). Ginger (2007) uses the term *dyadic therapy* (not individual and not group-based but conducted in a dyad consisting of the client and therapist), and Feder (2013) focuses on group therapy oriented entirely towards the group process. Participants in group therapy with Perls volunteered to step out into the middle of the room and work one-on-one with the therapist, for example on their dream, while the rest of the group watched the whole process. The founder of the Gestalt school of psychotherapy reacted aversively when the observers began interfering in his work. Nowadays, all group members tend to be involved in the therapeutic process; this means the conversation between group members is taking place in the *here and now* (Mann, 2010). It is also possible to combine both styles of work (Yontef & Jacobs, 2008). Erving and Polster (1973) discuss the advantages of group therapy, pointing out, among other things, that in such a situation the person doing therapy work has an opportunity to open up not only to an experienced professional but also to other people, which affords a genuine rather than merely theoretical experience of social acceptance or rejection. Additionally, since the problems presented during group therapy sessions are often not only

specific to individuals but also common in nature, experiencing psychotherapy in a community can increase a shared sense of humanity among its participants. Polster and Polster (1973) propose yet another, innovative, style of working with a group, in which the psychotherapist not only works one-on-one with the group observing this work, but in which the group is actively involved in the individual volunteer's work with the psychotherapist. In a way, group participants aid the professional in noticing how and where the individual in the center avoids contact and experience. The psychotherapist should not be focused solely on the volunteer, but also on the whole group and allow them to actively engage in the therapeutic process. Currently, psychotherapists tend to replace the model in which one person steps out to the center with a model that involves the whole group in the process. Individual therapy or couple's therapy (Yontef & Jacobs, 2008; Yontef, 2012) are currently the most frequent forms of work in the Gestalt approach, although it is also possible to extend them into family and group therapy (O'Neil, 2012), and these models are preferred by certain groups of psychotherapists (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993).

Theoretical Development

The subsequent generations of Gestalt psychotherapists have also contributed to the theoretical development of this approach. Clarkson and Mackewn (1993) identify several key areas in which the approach has changed in recent decades: (a) a graphic representation of the Gestalt cycle, proposed in several versions by Zinker (1977), Clarkson (1989), and Ginger (2007); (b) the development of group process theory, promoted mainly by Zinker in 1977, Kepner in 1980, and Clarkson, Mackewn, and Shaw in 1992; (c) the development of the concepts of relation and phenomenological dialogue, continued by Yontef (1992a), Hycner (1991), Jacobs (1989), and Clarkson (1990); (d) the development of the field theory, stimulated by Wheeler (1991), Clarkson (1991), and Parlett (1992); (e) the notion of creative life force, emphasized by Clarkson; and (f) the integration of knowledge and concepts

inspired by other approaches (cf. Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993, p. 244; Smith, 1977). Ginger (2007), Bloom (2011), and Philippson (2012) also largely contributed to the development of Gestalt theory. Today, increasingly strong emphasis is placed on explaining Gestalt terminology and its theoretical development, as evidenced by the increase in the number of publications addressing these issues.

Institute and Research Development

The first Gestalt Institute, which exists to this day, was founded in Manhattan in 1952 in Laura and Fritz's apartment under the name of the New York Institute for Gestalt Therapy. Naranjo (2000) mentions the split in Gestalt psychotherapy that occurred in the wake of Perls's death; practitioners divided then into the Eastern approach, referred to by Wagner-Moore (2004) as orthodox, and the Western approach (with reference to the East and West coast of the USA, respectively). There was a very simple cause behind this split: it is a known fact that Perls was not the only founder of this approach, and at some point – according to Naranjo – the initial cooperation between the founders turned into competition. Perls established the institute in New York, but he later moved to California. The chief originator of Gestalt psychotherapy worked on developing his ideas and the Gestalt approach itself for the rest of his life, at one point even claiming that the book published in 1951, which gave rise to this approach, was outdated. Perls's former collaborators responded with rejection to rejection. They disapproved of his approach, arguing that he did not practice true Gestalt psychotherapy and referring to his work as "Perlsism" (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993, p. 191). In this way, the Gestalt community split up into Perls's supporters, associated with the Western school, and his opponents, originally from the Eastern school, who did not agree with his practice in the final period of his life (which is the style of work that received the greatest recognition), claiming that he only wanted to attract publicity and attached too much importance to the notion of catharsis. Clarkson and Mackewn, who also quote other

researchers, report: "Some examples of Perls' own work (as portrayed in the transcripts) do seem to be primarily aimed at dramatic catharsis rather than awareness, understanding and dialogue" (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993, p. 135). An explanation of the differences between the schools from the East and West coast of the USA is provided by Latner (1986). Currently, however, this division already belongs to the past of Gestalt psychotherapy.

Over the recent decades, the network of Gestalt institutes and centers has been growing intensively not only in the United States, but also worldwide. Today, the largest number of institutes are located in North America, South America, and Europe; in Europe there are countries that are home to more than five institutes (e.g., Denmark, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Poland). Currently, the institutes are required to meet specific accreditation requirements to maintain a high standard of work. There are also organizations for therapists, with some of them responsible for the accreditation of centers, e.g., the European Association for Gestalt Therapy, the Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy, or the International Federation of Gestalt Training Organizations. Parallel to the development of training centers, Gestalt psychotherapy has entered numerous universities, offering lectures on the topic for students; some academic centers are also open to the possibility of writing master's and doctoral dissertations in this approach.

Conclusions

We propose to describe Gestalt psychotherapy using three basic categories: method, concepts, and techniques. This article was devoted to explaining these and providing examples of their application in therapy. First, we described the method used by the Gestalt psychotherapist, which is the phenomenological method. Next, we listed and defined the basic concepts used in the Gestalt approach, namely: holism, awareness (figure-ground), here and now, contact and contact boundary, the client is the expert/the client is free, the client's

responsibility for change, and internal support. Finally, we discussed basic techniques such as psychodrama, dream work, chair work, and body work. Since its origins, Gestalt psychotherapy has developed greatly: the number of therapy recipients has increased and the style of work has changed (in regard, for instance, to the non-directive aspect, dialogue, or the ways of working with a group), in conjunction with the evolution of Gestalt theory and the expansion of Gestalt institutes. The last part of the article elaborates on these issues.

Like many of our predecessors, we have attempted to impose order on the terminology used in Gestalt psychotherapy. However, as many psychotherapists point out, it is difficult to devise an unequivocal pattern for it to fit into, since the Gestalt approach greatly values the psychotherapist's creativity in adapting to the situation (Zinker, 1977). Houston believes that "Gestalt therapy is not amenable to formulae, to being manualised in the way that earns plaudits from certain kinds of academic researchers" (Houston, 2003, p. 5). Wysong writes that "Gestalt therapy became something to 'do' rather than appreciate and understand" (Wysong, 1986, p. i). Joslyn (1975) points to the fact that it is rather difficult to describe Gestalt with words. The author emphasizes the similarity of Gestalt to Zen philosophy, which is said to be a teaching system with no teachers. Likewise, to be fully understood, Gestalt must be experienced. One must not stop at the level of facts, as otherwise one runs the risk of falling into what is referred to as "aboutism" (cf. Perls, 1973b, p. 12)—a situation when, according to Perls, you only talk about something instead of experiencing it. This is because Gestalt is not only a theoretical system but also experience, practice, and a kind of therapeutic philosophy (see Paruzel-Czachura, 2015). Naranjo put this issue as follows: "It is a 'therapy' more than a theory, an art more than a psychological system" (Naranjo, 1970, p. 33).

To deal with this difficulty, attempts were also made to provide a poetic description of this approach. In our opinion, Naranjo's poem cited below is the most accurate attempt so far

to convey what it means to work in this perspective, which is why we would to like to quote it in conclusion:

> Live now. Be concerned with the present rather than with past or future.
>
> Live here. Deal with what is present rather than with what is absent.
>
> Stop imagining. Experience the real.
>
> Stop unnecessary thinking. Rather, taste and see.
>
> Express rather than manipulate, explain, justify, or judge.
>
> Give in to unpleasantness and pain just as to pleasure. Do not restrict your awareness.
>
> Accept no should or ought other than your own. Adore no graven image.
>
> Take full responsibility for your actions, feelings, and thoughts.
>
> Surrender to being as you are. (Naranjo, 1970, pp. 49–50)

The limitation of the article is that it does not exhaust the subject – there are a number of other concepts significant for Gestalt therapy (e.g., contact avoidance mechanisms or types of contact cycles), which there was not enough space here to discuss. To justify this, let us note that the aim of the article was to organize the basic terminology used in the Gestalt approach, not to describe all possible concepts. We encourage the reader to refer to the available sources discussing the theory and practice of Gestalt psychotherapy, especially to the recent publications (e.g., Francesetti, Gecele, & Roubal, 2013).

Further research into the theory behind Gestalt psychotherapy should focus, for instance, on its effectiveness, as well as on methods for verifying the effectiveness of therapy, taking into account the latest methodological requirements and the possibility of replicating research results. In addition, there is a need for an up-to-date analysis of the achievements of Perls's colleagues and their contribution to the development of therapy (with special focus on Laura Perls, who wrote little but trained generations of psychotherapists). It also seems worth describing the contemporary varieties of Gestalt psychotherapy and conducting empirical research devoted to this subject, taking intercultural differences into account – for instance, are there elements of the approach that are more characteristic of and more significant in

South America as compared to Europe? It would also be beneficial to study and analyze what techniques are the most often applied for particular therapeutic purposes or with a specific group of clients (e.g., children or schizophrenics) and to review the newer schools of therapy that refer to, and draw on, Gestalt psychotherapy to a greater or lesser extent, either consciously or not.

References

Beisser, A. (1970). The paradoxical theory of change. In J. Fagan & I. Shepherd (Eds.), *Gestalt therapy now* (pp. 77–80). Palo Alto: Science and Bahavior Books.

Bhasin, M. K., Dusek, J. A., Chang, B. H., Joseph, M. G., Denninger, J. W., Fricchione, G. L., Benson, H., & Liebermann, T. A. (2013). Relaxation Response Induces Temporal Transcriptome Changes in Energy Metabolism, Insulin Secretion and Inflammatory Pathways, *PLOS ONE 8*(5): e62817.

Bloom, D. (2011). Sensing animals/knowing persons: A challenge to some basic ideas in Gestalt therapy. In T. B.-Y. Levine (Ed.), *Gestalt therapy: Advances in theory and practice* (pp. 71–82). New York, NY: Routledge.

Bloom, D. (2019). Gestalt therapy and phenomenology: When Parallel lines Intersect. In P. Brownell (Ed.), *Handbook for Theory, Research and Practice in Gestalt Therapy* (pp. 183–202). Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Bloom, D. (2009). The Phenomenological Method of Gestalt Therapy: Revisiting Husserl to Discover the "Essence" of Gestalt Therapy, *Gestalt Review, 13* (3), 277–295.

Brownell, P. (2016). Contemporary Gestalt therapy. In D. J. Cain, K. Keenan & S. Rubin (Eds.), *Humanistic Psychotherapies: Handbook of Research and Practice* (pp. 219–250). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Clarkson, P., & Mackewn, J. (1993). *Fritz Perls.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Clarkson, P. (1989). *Gestalt Counselling in Action.* London: Sage Publications.

Clarkson, P. (1990). A Multiplicity of Psychotherapeutic Relationships. *British Journal of Psychotherapy, 7* (2), 148–163.

Clarkson, P. (1991). Individuality and Commonality in Gestalt. *British Gestalt Journal, 1* (1), 28–37.

Clarkson, P., Mackewn, J., & Shaw, P. (1992). *Quantum Group Process.* Training workshop at *metanoia*. London.

Emerson, P., & Smith, E. W. L. (1974). Contributions of Gestalt Psychology To Gestalt Therapy. *The Counseling Psychologist, 4,* 8–12.

Enright, J. B. (1970). An introduction to Gestalt techniques. In J. Fagan & I. Shepherd (Eds.), *Gestalt therapy now* (pp. 107–124). New York – Evanston – San Francisco – London: Harper Colophon Books.

Feder, B. (2013). *Gestalt Group Therapy: A Practical Guide*. Scotts Valley, California: Createspace Independent Publishing Platform.

Francesetti, G., Gecele, M., & Roubal, J. (2013). *Gestalt Therapy in Clinical Practice: From Psychopathology to the Aesthetics of Contact.* Siracusa: Istituto di Gestalt.

Ginger, S. (2007). *Gestalt Therapy: The Art Of Contact.* London: Karnac Books.

Greenberg, L., Elliott, R., & Lietaer, G. (1994). Research on experiential therapies. In M. J. Lambert (Ed.), *Bergin & Garfield's, Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavior Change* (pp. 509–539). New York: Wiley.

Grzesiuk, L. (2006). *Psychoterapia. Teoria* [*Psychotherapy. Theory*] (t.1). Warszawa: Eneteia.

Houston, G. (2003). *Brief Gestalt Therapy*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Husserl, E. (1931). *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology.* New York: The Macmillan Company.

Hycner, R. H. (1991). The I-Thou Relationship and Gestalt Therapy. *Gestalt Journal, 13* (1), 42–54.

Jacobs, L. (1989). Dialogue in Gestalt Theory and Therapy. *Gestalt Journal, 12* (1), 25–68.

Janowski, M., & Biedrycka, M. (2014). Skuteczność psychoterapii Gestalt w zakresie regulacji emocji u pacjentów z zaburzeniami nerwicowymi/lękowymi. [Gestalt therapy's effectiveness in emotion's modulation of patients with neurotic/anxiety disorders]. *Psychoterapia, 4* (171), 63–75.

Joslyn, M. (1975) Figure/Ground: Gestalt/Zen. In. J. O. Stevens (Ed.), *Gestalt is* (pp. 238–257). Utah: Real People Press.

Kellogg, S. (2004). Dialogical Encounters: Contemporary Perspectives on "Chairwork" in Psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy Theory Research & Practice, 41* (3)*, 310–320.

Kepner, E. (1980). Gestalt Group Process. In B. Feder & R. Ronall (Eds.), *Beyond the Hot Seat* (pp. 5–24). New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Kepner, J. I. (1997). *Body Process: A Gestalt Approach to Working with the Body in Psychotherapy.* Santa Cruz, California: Gestalt Press.

Latner, J. (1986). *The Gestalt therapy book*. Gouldsboro: The Gestalt Journal Press.

Levi, N. (2013). The Gilded Cage of Creative Adjustment: a Gestalt Approach to Psychotherapy with Children and Adolescents. In G. Francesetti, M. Gecele & J. Roubal, (Eds.), *Gestalt Therapy in Clinical Practice: From Psychopathology to the Aesthetics of Contact* (pp. 267–280). Siracusa: Istituto di Gestalt.

Mann, D. (2010). *Gestalt therapy. 100 key points & techniques*. London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Mellibruda, J. (2009). *Teoria i praktyka terapii Gestalt*. [Theory and practice of Gestalt therapy]. Warsaw: Instytut Psychologii Zdrowia.

Naranjo, C. (1970). Present-Centeredness: Technique, Prescription, and Ideal. In J. Fagan & I. Shepherd (Eds.), *What is Gestalt therapy* (pp. 47–69). New York: Perennial Library, Harper & Row.

Naranjo, C. (2000). *Gestalt therapy. The attitude & practice of an atheoretical experimentalism*. Wales: Crown House Publishing Limited.

O'Neil, B. (2012). Gestalt family therapy: a field perspective. In T. Bar-Yoseph Levine (Ed.), *Gestalt Therapy Advances in Theory and Practice* (pp. 123–137). London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Parlett, M. (1992). *Field Theory.* Plenary lecture at European Gestalt Conference, Pans.

Paruzel-Czachura, M. (2015). *Między psychologią, psychoterapią i filozofią praktyczną. Poszukiwanie autentycznego życia w nurcie Gestalt*. [Among psychology, psychotherapy and practical philosophy. Looking for authentic life in Gestalt approach]. Sopot: GWP.

Paruzel-Czachura, M., & Konieczniak, B. (2019). Psychoterapia Gestalt w zarządzaniu zasobami ludzkimi. [Gestalt therapy in human resource management]. *Zarządzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi, 3-4,* 175–204.

Passons, W. R. (1975). *Gestalt Approaches in Counselling*. New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston.

Perls, F. S. (1969a). *Gestalt therapy verbatim*. Lafayette, CA: Real People Press.

Perls, F. S. (1969b). *Ego, hunger, and aggression*. New York: Random House.

Perls, F. S. (1969c). *In and Out the Garbage Pail.* Gouldsboro: The Gestalt Journal Press.

Perls, F. S. (1970). Dream Seminars. In J. Fagan & I. Shepherd (Eds.), *Gestalt therapy now* (pp. 204-233). Palo Alto: Science and Bahavior Books.

Perls, F. S. (1973a). *The Gestalt Approach & Eye Witness to Therapy*. Palo Alto, California: Bantam Books.

Perls, F. S. (1973b). Four lecturers. In J. Fagan & I. L. Shepherd (Eds.), *What is Gestalt therapy?* (pp. 11–49), New York, Evenston, San Francisco, London: Perennial Library.

Perls, F. S. (1975a). Group vs. Individual Therapy. In J. O. Stevens (Ed.), *Gestalt is* (pp. 9–15). Moab, UT: Real People Press.

Perls, F. S. (1975b). Morality, Ego Boundary and Aggression. In J. O. Stevens (Ed.), *Gestalt is* (pp. 27–38). Utah: Real People Press.

Perls, F. S. (1978). Cooper Union Forum – Lecture Series: "The Self", and "Finding Self Through Gestalt Therapy", *Gestalt Journal, 1*(1), 54–73.

Perls, L. (1992a). Concepts and Misconceptions of Gestalt Therapy. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 32* (3), 50–56.

Perls, L. (1992b). *Living at the Boundary*. Gouldsboro: The Gestalt Journal Press.

Perls, F. S., Hefferline, R. F., & Goodman, P. (1951). *Gestalt therapy: excitement and growth in the human personality*. New York: Dell.

Philippson, P. (2012). *Gestalt therapy. Roots and branches – Collected papers*. London: Karnac.

Polster, E., & Polster, M. (1973). *Gestalt therapy integrated*. New York: Brunner & Mazel.

Raffagnino, R. (2019). Gestalt Therapy Effectiveness: A Systematic Review of Empirical Evidence. *Open Journal of Social Sciences, 7,* 66–83.

Roubal, J. (Ed.) (2016). *Towards a Research Tradition in Gestalt Therapy.* Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Sartre, J. P. (2007). *Existentialism is humanism.* New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.

Seppälä, E. M., Nitschke, J. B., Tudorascu, D. L., Hayes, A., Goldstein, M. R., Nguyen, D. T.,

Shariff, A. F., Tracy, J. L., & Markusoff, J. L. (2012). (Implicitly) Judging a Book by Its Cover: The Power of Pride and Shame Expressions in Shaping Judgments of Social Status. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *38* (9), 1178–93.

Serlin, I. A., & Shane, P. (1999). Laura Perls and Gestalt Therapy: Her Life and Values. In D. Moss (Ed.). *Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology. A Historical and Biographical Sourcebook* (pp. 374–384). London: Greenwood Press.

Serlin, I. A. (1992). Tribute to Laura Perls. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 32* (3), 57–66.

Sills, C., Fish, S., & Lapworth, P. (1995). *Gestalt Counselling.* Bicester: Speechmark Publishing Ltd.

Smith, E. W. L. (Ed.). (1977). *The growing edge of Gestalt therapy*. Secaucus, N. J.: The Citadel Press.

Spagnuolo Lobb, M. (2013). Fundamentals and Development of Gestalt Therapy in the Contemporary Context. In G. Francesetti, M. Gecele & J. Roubal, (Eds.). *Gestalt Therapy in Clinical Practice: From Psychopathology to the Aesthetics of Contact* (pp. 27–54). Siracusa: Istituto di Gestalt.

Steward, R. D. (1974). The Philosophical Background Of Gestalt Therapy. *The Counseling Psychologist, 4,* 13–14.

Stevens, B. (1975). Bodywork. In J. O. Stevens (Ed.). *Gestalt is* (pp. 160–191). Moab, UT: Real People Press.

Strümpfel, U. (2006). *Research findings on Gestalt therapy*. Cologne: Edition Humanistische Psychologie.

Wagner-Moore, L. (2004). Gestalt therapy: past, present, theory, and research. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, 41*(2), 180–189.

Wheeler, G. (1991). *Gestalt Reconsidered: A New Approach to Contact and Resistance.* New York: Gardner.

Wysong, J. (1986). Foreword. In J. Latner, *The Gestalt therapy book* (pp. i–ii). Gouldsboro: The Gestalt Journal Press.

Yontef, G. M., & Simkin, J. S. (1989). Gestalt therapy. In R. J. Corsini & D. Wedding (Eds.), *Current psychotherapies* (pp. 323–361). New York: Peacock.

Yontef, G. M. (1992a). *Awareness, Process and Dialogue: Essays on Gestalt Therapy.* Highland, NY: Gestalt Journal.

Yontef, G. M. (1992b). Recent Trends in gestalt Therapy in the United States and What We Need to Learn from Them. *British Gestalt Journal, 1*(1), 5–20.

Yontef, G. M., & Jacobs, J. (2008). Gestalt Therapy. In R. Corsini & D. Wedding (Eds.), *Current Psychotherapies* (pp. 328–367). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole-Thompson Learning.

Yontef, G. M. (2012). The four relationships of Gestalt therapy couples work. In T. Bar-Yoseph Levine (Ed.), *Gestalt Therapy Advances in Theory and Practice* (pp. 123–137). London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Zinker, J. (1977). *Creative Process in Gestalt Therapy.* New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Footnotes

¹ The differences and similarities between psychoanalysis and Gestalt therapy are discussed in many sources (e.g., Perls, 1969b; Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951; Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993).

² Perls initiated the creation of the Gestalt approach and developed it together with his wife Laura – initially as psychoanalysts and later as Gestalt psychotherapists. However, the first book was a result of Perls' collaboration with Hefferline, Perls's former patient and a psychologist himself, who devoted his doctoral thesis to analyzing the combination of the Gestalt approach with behaviorism – and with the famous writer Goodman, who eventually also became a Gestalt psychotherapist.

³ Perls used the support of many different psychotherapists, including, Karen Horney's disciple Clara Happer and the orthodox Freudian Eugene Harnik.

⁴ While Fritz was fascinated by theater, Laura was interested in music (she was a professional piano player), movement, and dance. While in Berlin, she attended Elsa Gindler's classes. Gindler was a somatic body work pioneer and the originator of the what she called *Lebens-Schule* (school of life). Later on, both Laura and Fritz attended classes taught by Charlotte Selver, Gindler's student, who promoted her method under the name of Sensory Awareness and taught, among other places, at Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California.

⁵ The full bibliography of Perls' works is provided, among others, by Latner (1986).

⁶ It is assumed that Gestalt psychology was initiated in 1912 with Max Wertheimer's famous publication on the illusion caused by two lights located some distance apart and blinking alternately. Although the lights were two separate objects, they were perceived as one moving object. In his paper, Wertheimer called this phenomenon the phi phenomenon. Thus, Gestalt psychology deals with phenomena related to perception. Perls used the theory of Gestalt psychology (including the concept of figure and ground or unfinished business) and applied it to the area of human motivation.

[7] "I do my thing and you do your thing. I am not in this world to live up to your expectations, and you are not in this world to live up to mine. You are you, and I am I, and if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful. If not, it can't be helped" (Perls, 1969, p. 4).

[8] In the therapeutic process, the counselor may suggest drawing a Mandala or use simpler activities such as asking the client to write their name with the less-used hand, which may be a starting point for working on their childhood and memories.