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## Condensing the Field: Internet Communication and Gestalt Community

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Condensing the Field: Internet  
Communication and Gestalt Community

By  
Philip Brownell

Presented to the Faculty of the  
Graduate School of Clinical Psychology  
George Fox University  
in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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Newberg, Oregon  
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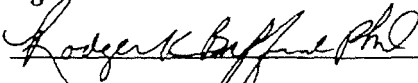
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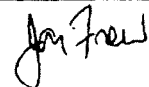
  
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Condensing the Field: Internet  
Communication and Gestalt Community

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Abstract

This article examines the influence of internet communication on the Gestalt community from the standpoint of the field. Drawing on current internet sources, field theorists, and Gestalt therapists, the work describes the internet, explaining key field dynamics, and it concludes that the global community of Gestalt therapy is undergoing rapid change due to internet influence. That community is being enriched; it is becoming more aware of itself, and consequently its individual members are experiencing a professional camaraderie made more complex and more richly connected. At the same time, because of this increasing connectedness, it is also

condensing. Internet communication is facilitating a realignment of issues and spokespersons and a new interface between the Gestalt community and the wider field of psychotherapy.

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Above these, however, I express my deep love, admiration, respect, and thankfulness for my family: Matthew, Zachary, and Anastasia, who have often proven patient and forgiving of a busy and preoccupied father, and Rebecca, whose companionship, passion, and strength of character mean so much in our married life.

Last, thanks to Christ Jesus for saving me from futility, sustaining through trial, and abiding with me in faithfulness; I know You love me.

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Chapter 1

Condensing the Field: Internet  
Communication and Gestalt Community

During the 1997 international conference of the Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy (AAGT), several people met to participate in a discussion of the effect of internet communication on the Gestalt community, that is upon both the physical groupings of Gestalt practitioners in their various cultural settings and upon the nature and quality of their relating whenever they associate with one another. There were various concerns raised by these participants. The conversation extended to anxiety that the internet might overtake a person's life, and people wanted to understand if real contact, including the touch of emotion, was even possible with internet exchange. In the midst of that, one person, as if standing before the easel of our cultural milieu, exclaimed, "I want to not be left behind; my mother's on email!"

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What each seemed to be asking was how to manage the effect of the internet. Some had chronicled a progression from the typewriter and archaic word-processing machine to their present use of the computer, including a growing sense that once again they needed to make a technological advancement in order to keep up. Some approached this with enthusiasm and some with dread, but all seemed sure that the internet was something that would effect them. Indeed, several wanted to learn the basics of how to put together their own web pages.

Many in the Gestalt community consider the internet one of those computer-related annoyances they would prefer to do without. But is this possible? How would such "doing without" be defined? Would it mean merely not choosing to have a modem and an internet account, or would it mean not having to deal with internet modality? The internet is a new and powerful influence in the field; it is, "a totality of co-existing facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent" (Lewin, 1951, p. 240), and its force does not support the pretense that people live in a different set of such connected and co-existing circumstances. Like the proverbial artist dabbing paint on a canvas who suddenly realizes the painting is dictating where the next stroke of the brush must go, people living today feel the compulsion to learn about the internet and how they might use it. Even though some would like to think they can rip off the canvas and start over again, there is no ripping up the internet. Like major technological advances that have forever altered the field before it, internet action is rearranging the way we live in, and relate to, our world.

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This article is a look at internet communication and how it's changing the Gestalt therapeutic community. Thus, it is a field-theoretical examination. As such, one can read new ways to understand field dynamics and use the internet as a case study. In addition, one can utilize field dynamics to understand the impact of internet communication so as to better comprehend the changes taking place in the Gestalt community because of it. Certainly, other aspects of Gestalt theory also stand pertinent, and some are drawn in for consideration because of the pull of a discussion of field dynamics; one of these is the contact style exemplified by people as they move with the force of the internet.

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## Chapter 2

### Internet-Who Are You and What Are You Doing Here?

“The Internet is at once a world-wide broadcasting capability, a mechanism for information dissemination, and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location” (Leiner, et. al., Feb. 1997, on-line). It started out two decades ago as a means for scientists and technicians to communicate with one another over physical distance. It was a network of large and cumbersome computers, connected through phone lines and transfer boxes called gateways, and it was set up to link people collaborating on scientific research. As changes in computer capability occurred, growth of internet usefulness also took place. One of the key advances resulted when personal computers were incorporated into this world wide network. The internet expanded to become a tool of other domains as well, and eventually it became a cultural phenomenon. Howard Reingold (1993) described it by saying...

People in virtual communities use words on screens to exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, find friends and lose them, play games, flirt, create a little high art and a lot of idle talk. People in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind. You can't kiss anybody and nobody can punch you in the nose, but a lot can happen within those boundaries. To the millions who have been drawn into it, the richness and vitality of computer-linked cultures is attractive, even addictive (on-line).

Email and the world wide web became the most notable and frequently used forms of such internet communication. In email people found they could write letters and that communication could reach its destination in minutes as opposed to days or even weeks. Furthermore, whole documents could be attached to email messages, downloaded onto another computer, opened, and read by another person. Email became a tool of business and government, as well as of scholarship, bringing into closer and more immediate contact an ever widening population of people from varied positions.

Then came the world wide web, and suddenly people could publish documents in a graphic and interactive fashion, so the structure and organization of such products also changed. People began moving from a largely linear view of literature to a dynamic and interactive conceptualization. They left behind the simple table of

contents in favor of a map of their document's geography. Furthermore, they realized that documents themselves could change, constantly open to updating, and therefore no longer fixed following publication. Documents also acquired the ability to contain various forms of media, so that people began imbedding sound and animation. Eventually, live web-based conferencing showed up. The computer programming languages used to accomplish these various feats also developed, and it became possible to publish research questionnaires, receive the information back from various people around the world, and process the data, all within the scope of a person's web page.

Electronic publishing has paralleled this development. Judith Edwards (1997) reported,

The total number of electronic journals is now so large that the most ostrich like of librarians can no longer ignore them. A recent posting to *lis-elib* maintained that there will be 3000+ e-journals based on existing publications alone (i.e. parallel print/e-journals) by the end of this year (until now we have been talking about 100s) (on-line)

People rapidly began looking for ways to make money using the world wide web, and that puzzle is still being worked out; however, the communication infrastructure that will make possible large scale movement in web-based commerce has already been supplied. In mid July of 1997 it was reported that Master Card and Visa were in the process of implementing secure transaction technology that would

allow safer use of credit cards in the on-line environment. Internet Electronic commerce was reported to be over one billion dollars a year and doubling every 6 months. Victor Millar, president and CEO of AT&T Solutions was quoted to have said "It affects every business, whether or not they are on-line today. It's a ripple effect. Even if your customers are not on-line, your customers' customers probably are." (G. McMahon, personal communication, July 18, 1997)

Victor Chang (personal communication, July 13, 1997), a multi-language electronic commerce and cross-culture marketing analyst, noted significant and recent advances in the usefulness of the internet, stating, "...we have major real world developments impinging on the Internet virtual world, and they are likely to have profound effects on both the real world and the virtual world."

Two of these developments are net stratification and globalization. Stratification is taking place as major non-internet industries adopt internet technology. In most cases they are "mission critical, high performance networks through which a big part of world commerce flows. The dollar values are in the Trillion per day range and so moving their business into the Internet must have a profound effect on the economy of the Internet" (V. Chang, personal communication, July 13, 1997).

Globalisation is the second megatrend. This is the effect of the emerging and emerged "Tiger" economies joining the internet, which up to now has been predominantly the preserve of the US and the Europeans. Latest numbers rank Japan

first, Asia second, Latin America third, US fifth and Europe last in internet growth rates (V. Chang, personal communication, July 13, 1997). As a result, more money will hit the internet economy, Asian cultural concepts and values will become more prevalent on the internet, and "for the first time the business culture and ethos of somewhere like Hong Kong will meet US and Western business culture and ethos face to face and on pretty much equal terms." (V. Chang, personal communication, July 13, 1997)

Along the way, large corporations and businesses have adopted web technology as a means of satisfying the need to communicate more effectively within the boundaries of their own organizations. They have created localized internets by setting up servers and connecting all their computers within their own businesses to their central sources. Then they use web-like features, eliminating the cost of paper and ink, and thus also speeding up the rate and effectiveness of their contact with one another. This development has come to be known as an intranet.

Some are now extending their intranets beyond the confines of their corporate structures to include customers; in so doing, they have created efficient means of customer support and are beginning to develop secure areas where people with passwords can access their services and purchase their products directly through the internet. Some have modified this electronic-storefront concept to create on-line classrooms. The American Psychological Association, for instance, is currently



developing such a web-based network to facilitate continuing education. These kind of extended intranets have come to be known as extranets.

As retail marketing, banking, and cheaper means of accessing the internet become available, there is a very high likelihood that a significant portion of financial transactions will be conducted utilizing web technology. As most business goes the way of the internet, the business of psychotherapy will also become increasingly effected by internet language, thinking, and practices. For instance, the DSM-IV this year will go online, allowing practitioners to access its data base for ease in electronic charting and treatment planning, which correlates with third party reimbursement.

To assess the internet's influence on the field of Gestalt therapy one must realize that the larger field of life, of which Gestalt therapy is a part, is embracing internet technology at a rapid rate, with comprehensive consequences for the way we all live. For instance, the number of respondents to a Nielsen poll taken in 1996 (CommerceNet / Nielsen Media Research, 1996) who had access to the Internet increased 50% between August of 1995 and March of 1996, with an actual usage growth probably in the same range. The report also indicated that new users differed significantly from previous users in that they began covering a broader spectrum of educational backgrounds, were less likely to be computer professionals, or any other professional or managerial occupation, and that they lived in lower income households. They were less intense users and more likely to be using the Internet for personal reasons. Compared to previous users, a greater proportion of these people

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were women. These findings suggest that the use of the internet has infiltrated to a deeper level of the society.

Currently, around a quarter of all U.S. households have personal computers with modems attached (Quinn, 1997). New companies such as Oracle are teaming up with Netscape, the leading web browser software company, in a race against Microsoft's WebTV to create such an inexpensive and easy way to access and utilize the web that these companies imagine being able to place the web in every home much the way most people presently own toasters, microwaves, or television sets. The internet is becoming ubiquitous.

Consequently, it is not a matter of some cohesive entity - the Gestalt therapists - resisting internet expansion into their lives; rather, little by little an increasing number of Gestalt practitioners, by virtue of being alive and functioning in their relative positions in the field, are acquiring internet facility. Since the time the AAGT initiated its presence on the world wide web, there has easily been a 300% growth in Gestalt-related sites, and the rate of growth, including significant sophistication in the level of participation, is also increasing. There are Gestalt-related productions on the world wide web from Austria, Germany, Italy, Mexico, South America, Sweden, and the USA. The editorial staff at Gestalt!, a reviewed electronic journal, extends around the globe and includes people from Australia, Austria, Brazil, Israel, Germany, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, the UK, Uruguay, and the USA.

The internet is nothing more than people in connection, doing what interests them but enabled to meet with one another to collaborate across time and distance a never before, and that includes people in the Gestalt community. It brings different cultures together. It allows work to be accomplished faster. It reduces the distance between points, and creates the perception that space and time have become contracted.

If the relationships among people in the worldwide Gestalt community, for instance, were compared to a physical sphere, then the internet would be condensing its mass. This condensing of the field can be seen in the way ideas develop on the internet. For example, during preparation for the second issue of Gestalt!, three authors spent two weeks working on a manuscript (Brownell, Levin, O'Neill, 1997) they sent back and forth to one another using email. It went from the USA to South Africa to Australia and around again and again until they had each shaped it into something presentable. The article had grown out of concerns shared by all three at various times, at various venues on the internet. Indeed, its subject, a call for guidelines in ethics and training practices, had been discussed during the organizational meetings of Gestalt Australia and New Zealand (GANZ), as well as by many in the AAGT. Before the internet, this kind of collaboration would have taken much longer to evolve, and the self awareness, the realization that people at disparate positions in the field were all thinking about these issues, might not have been achieved at all. It is the ability of internet communication to connect people around

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the world and to bring together the concerns they all share at the same time, that is, in the field that actually exists at that time. Such contact heightens self awareness in the global Gestalt community.

## Chapter 3

### Relevant Field Properties

In order to understand the enriching and condensing of the field, how it is taking place and what it looks like in the people around us, one must comprehend the dynamics of the field itself. What follows is a description of the composition of a field, the boundary of contact in a field, field forces, and situational units.

#### Field and Boundary

We all exist in contexts, and we exist in many contexts simultaneously, each context overlapping, intersecting, or nesting among others. One person can simultaneously experience someone else as part of his or her environment while being part of the other's environment in return (Frew, 1992). Furthermore, our existence in one context influences our experience of other contexts; this is the basis for what Gordon Wheeler calls "structured ground" (Wheeler, 1991). Each person cannot be fully understood without being considered in context, against the backdrop of his or her structured ground. Furthermore, we're not isolated individuals in a

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context (as if the person and the context were two absolutely separate things); we are person-in-context entities (ie, members of a community, practitioners of a profession) (Parlett, 1997). Consequently, the meaning of each person changes in correlation to changes in his or her context. We may leave one context only to join another, but we are never out of some kind of context, and that context is our field.

Just as there are levels of system, there are layers of field; indeed, it's common to describe aspects of the total lifespace as fields unto themselves, but in actuality everything that effects a person is their field, and these various aspects are merely layers within it.

Thus, there are the experiential and the substantive layers of the field (see Figure 1).

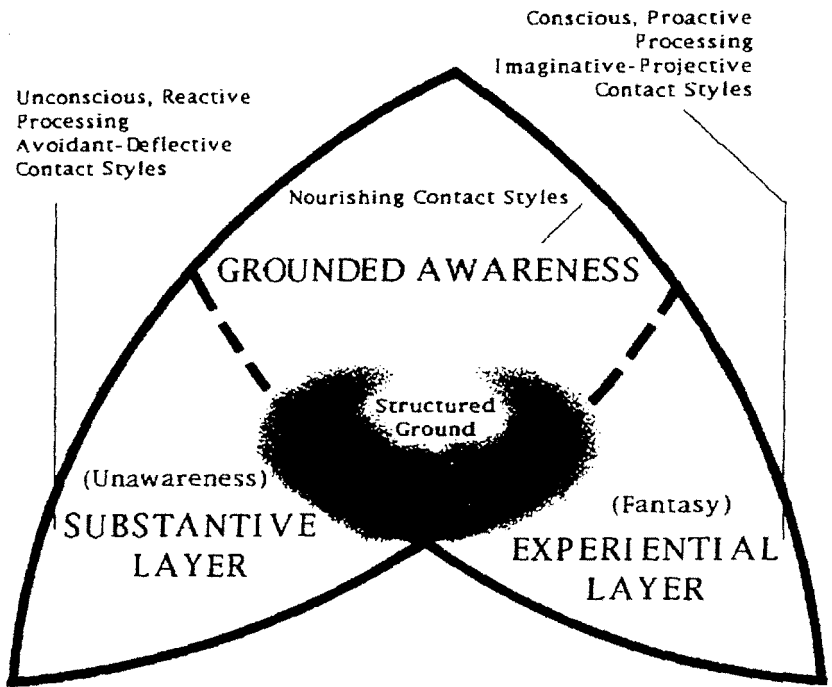


Figure 1: The Substantive and experiential layers of the unified field

As Lewin (1951) has described them, there are three conceptualizations to consider: the lifespaces (one's field), what is in the physical and social world that doesn't affect the life space (thus, what is not one's field), and the boundary of the life space, which constitutes parts of the physical or social world that do effect the life space. Thus, these boundary entities are actually part of the field, for everything having an effect is

part of one's field. This is confusing for traditional Gestalt therapists who view the boundary as that which is between an organism and its environment (i.e., that which separates an organism from something which it is not). Reinhard Fuhr (Personal communication, August 31, 1997) sensed this when he said,

many Gestalt therapists speak of a boundary between organism and environment, which we may approach, transgress or keep away from as if it was something solid. From the new perspective, there is no boundary, but we rather form what we use the metaphor boundary for in the process of contacts with the environment field.

(See also Wheeler's (1991) discussion of confluence and resistance in which to have no contact is to cease to exist; therefore, there is no in-between, in the customary sense of boundary.) We are left with Lewin's understanding that the boundary is in the life space. As Perls says, "...contacting occurs at the surface-boundary in the field of the organism/environment" (Perls, Hefferlein, Goodman, 1951, p. 303). It constitutes the substantive layer of the field, with which one forms a contact style, and from which one organizes the experiential layer of the field. "The process of perception, for instance, is intimately linked with this boundary zone because what is perceived is partly determined by the physical 'stimuli', i.e., that part of the physical world which affects the sensory organs at that time" (Lewin, 1951, p. 57). Or, as Parlett (1997) stated, "...'inner' and 'outer' reality are both contained within the field, as are other distinctions-such as 'person' and 'situation,' and 'figure' and 'ground'" (p.18).



This distinction is often missed by Gestalt theorists who have committed themselves to a phenomenological emphasis or have not reconciled phenomenology with the demand characteristics of the field. Succumbing to the first problem, Yonty (1993) stated categorically, "The field is phenomenologically defined" (p. 296). Succumbing to the second, Latner indicated at one point that the organism is embedded in the environment so that an understanding of it depended on an understanding of its relationship to the field (Latner, 1986), but previously he had contradicted himself by stating, "...what is real depends on the point of view of the person" (Latner, 1983, p. 77). This once again left out the impact of that which is outside the person. Martin Gold, a contemporary field theorist and social psychologist, summarized a similar dilemma in which Lewin himself struggled. Having stated that social facts become psychological facts through perception, Lewin also believed that the nature of the social facts determine how they will be perceived, even to the point of determining the experience and action of the perceivers (Gold, 1990). This kind of confusion needs clarifying, not only in the thinking of contemporary Gestalt practitioners, but also in the various writing of Lewin himself.

Although the experiential layer is the individual's phenomenology, or subjective "reality," it does not equal the substantive layer. The difference between these two layers can be illustrated by what takes place in a dialogue. One person speaks from his or her experience, but the other hears a story about an experience that is essentially foreign. Where the experiential layers of these two people meet is a

potential for intimacy, and so Wheeler (1997) is correct in saying that one's organization of the field in relationship is part of the field of another, but without inquiry and listening, one's contribution to the field of another becomes mere projection: something that destroys intimacy. The internal organization of the field, that is the experiential layer of one person, is part of the other's substantive layer. Both, indeed, are part of the field, but in different respects.

The substantive layer is the mix of objects, of which the subject is one. In the solar system, for instance, our earth is one object among many that orbit the sun. These celestial bodies actually exist, and the sun, one of the members of the substantive layer, effects the other objects by virtue of its mass and its radiant energy—we are drawn toward it, held in orbit by its gravitational pull, and we are warmed by it. This happens and effects everyone whether or not anyone in particular takes note of it. Moving to the level at which we do become aware, some of us have organized our world to revolve around sun baths, tans, what makes one person attractive to another, or what constitutes a good time.

All around us the people involved in the internet continue to develop this communication apparatus, and it has become a new boundary element in the field. Introduce something new like this, and one changes the field (Parlett, 1991). One also changes the person in it. Place a person in a new field, and that forces him or her to rethink what life and self are all about. The internet has changed the field, creating a force for change in the individual who is of the field (Parlett, 1997). The internet is a

huge elephant in the living room of our lives, and we may not be aware of this element of our boundary, this economic and social force, until it steps on us in some way. Then we organize a response. Some say, "Show me how to make web pages," while others say, "Show me how to get away from computers!"

### Forces

All changes are due to forces. With regard to cognitive structures (the experiential layer of the field) two types of forces are noteworthy (Lewin, 1951): those resulting from the cognitive structure of the experiential layer itself, and the other from valences (needs or motivations). Force can be distinguished from power, because power implies the possibility but not the actual exertion of pressure upon something. Furthermore, within a given field, the process is "epiphenomenon" while the real object of interest is "the constellation of forces" (Lewin, 1951). In other words, it's not so much that something moves; it's that something shoves. One may be acted upon by forces in the boundary which have no conscious corollary, yet which considerably effect an individual, or one may perceive the impact of a significant schema, or the pull of a desperate need in one's organization of the boundary. Both constitute force. Force is the tendency to move, and movement is what will happen when the force is greater than inertia (Lewin, 1951).

Currently, every time a television advertisement lists the web address of its client there's already a nudge. When friends tell friends that they finally got on-line, someone feels the pressure. The force is becoming that resembling a cultural norm.

At the 1997 AAGT conference, for instance, one participant went to breakfast claiming that he guessed it was time to find out about the internet. He lived in a rural, forested part of Canada, and he confessed that the internet had even come to his little town.

Forces can also be grouped into what Lewin (1951) called force fields. Within his model, it was a way to conceptualize figure formation: the process by which one thing stands out in particular interest against the backdrop of other things of relatively little distinction (Korb, Gorrell, & Van De, Riet, 1989), and as something fluid and dynamic rather than fixed and linear. Thus, within any given field, Lewin imagined several "force fields" at work simultaneously. Several may point toward the same region or are aimed at the same thing, and these things are known as goals. Forces can also point away from a goal, deflecting attention, in which case they would be aversive fields. Furthermore, they can obstruct goals and be conceived of as barriers. Lewin's development of forces, and their resultant effect in people's relationships, seems quite compatible with Gestalt therapy's composition of boundary disturbances, or as Wheeler chooses, reistances (Wheeler, 1991). These disrupt the contact between individuals but are a dynamic function of figure formation. One might ask in tracking the process of contact, for instance, "With regard to what or whom is there the perception of pressure, where does it come from, and where is this force between persons directed?"

The condensing of the field due to the internet does not imply, furthermore, that the field is becoming uniform, characterized by a monotonous acceptance of

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computer technology. Just as different people manifest various contact styles, that patterns of responding to the opportunity for contact in the environment, and thus handle the same social demands with diverse behavior, so some embrace the internet risking the unknown to experience new challenges, some deflect the matter, refusing to consider the issues raised by internet communication, and some project upon the situation, avoiding or minimizing the significance of changes taking place.

As internet culture permeates the boundary, Gestalt practitioners will be forced to organize a response to it, and in so doing they will manifest a contact style that accords with the mix of forces, the pool of figures, that exist for them in the field. Some people will exhibit a measure of confluence and find nourishment, fed by the resources available on the internet. Others will manifest resistance and find themselves increasingly deprived, perhaps even out of step.

This is partially because of the inordinate magnitude, the strength of voice, that people who have internet facility exert. They have the means to get their messages before large groups of people in attractive ways. Those people are connected with counterparts around the world, and they interact beyond the traditional boundaries that have separated Gestalt therapy from the larger field. Thus, the field is in the process of realigning itself in accord with the connectedness formed by internet communication.

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### Situational Units

In evaluating a community where various forces are at play, one needs to allow enough time for the synthesis in which a common, or medium level emerges. This is what is meant by trusting in the process. Although we can only experience the field as it is in the present, in order to really understand what is going on psychologically one has to contemplate it for a period of time, the length of which actually depends on the situation. The larger the situation, the longer one needs to observe in order to understand the direction and velocity of behavior at any given time within that period. These periods of time Lewin (1951) called "situational units." Speaking of time within such situational units, he claimed

It is important to realize that the psychological past and the psychological future are simultaneously parts of the psychological field existing at a given time  $t$ . The time perspective is continually changing. According to field theory, any type of behavior depends upon the total field, including the time perspective at the time, but not, in addition, upon any past or future field and its time perspectives (Lewin, 1951, p. 54).

Thus, the internet may be condensing the field, but the field is always in flux (Resnick & Parlett, 1995) with merely the memory of some previous condition and the hope of some expected characteristic as bookends for the present. Put another way, memory of the past feeds significance by contributing to one's cognitive structure, and hope for the future provides potential, a possibility with regard to need and a capacity with

regard to motivation. These ignite the forces that eventually fuel change; contained within each situational unit is the raw material needed to formulate and satisfy gestalten.

Consequently, it is the nature of the situational unit, with its hindsight and its potentiality, that spurs expansion of the net and subsequent condensation of the field. People do not want to be left behind, caught in a futile spin in some backwater where they miss the energetic mix at the center of the community. Businesses rush to internet competency in order to survive, but that's because they are made up of people, and everyone has, somewhere in their history, the experience of having lost out on an opportunity. Those in the business of psychotherapy, even Gestalt psychotherapy, are not that different. The full potential of the internet is in the future, and nearly everyone involved in building the net understands that; however, that is precisely what energizes them. The groundfloor of a giant superstructure is still being poured. The situational unit is loaded, and it's being charged by the tremendous rate of change taking place in the computer industry as a whole.

## Chapter 4

### Enriching the Field: Future Trends As Gestalt Community Assimilates Internet Technology

What are the dimensions of this situational unit? In other words, how long will it take for virtually everyone to acquire internet facility and for the field to condense to a state of relative equilibrium (some would call this critical mass)? The rate of change is increasing exponentially, but the process is chaotic rather than linear, so perhaps it isn't that the field will reach a grand equilibrium as much as it will leap to one critical mass and then another. Commenting on the way such dynamics function, Paul Plsek (Personal communication, May, 1997) noted

To me, gestalt theory is an earlier expression of self-organization and the properties of what we are these days calling complex, adaptive systems. As I understand this field, one thing that is known is that the rate of flow of information in such systems directly impacts the probability of self-organization. The more information that flows among agents in a complex



adaptive system, the better chance they have of both coming together around an equilibrium point AND of moving to a new equilibrium point (an "attractor in a complex, chaotic system). If information flows freely over the internet, then naturally (from complexity theory) there will be more self organization and more flips to new points of self-organization.

Thus, the more Gestalt people interact with one another on the net, the more that activity will multiply, and the more it multiplies the more self organization will occur and the more the field will formulate clear figures around which ever more interaction will be manifest. Alan Meara (1997) wrote:

There are three sources of influence on self organization processes: a driving force; fluctuations either in the environment or within the system; and a set of external forces. Taking the individual as a self organizing system, the driving force could be a desire for wholeness, fluctuations could be a momentary sense of discomfort or a remark by another person; and some of the external forces could be formal demands for conformity, or performance. (p. 16)

Probably the most accurate thing that could be said is that the more Gestalt practitioners use the net, the more rapidly the field of Gestalt therapy will experience expansion and subsequent concentration. Meara (1997) has accurately recognized that forces exist for individuals in both the experiential and substantive fields ("driving force...external forces"), and with regard to internet influence, the velocity of change in the field because the internet can be assessed by how brief a time it has taken to get

to the present. In only two years the field has seen the creation of several major hubs (attractors) of Gestalt internet activity, with more coming on-line at an increasing rate, and the addition of numerous smaller and independent presences in the form of web sites for Gestalt institutes.

The AAGT inaugurated an email discussion list, and following the 1995 AAGT conference, they created their web site. At about the same time The Gestalt Journal put a site on the world wide web (<http://www.gestalt.org>). In 1996 Gestalt! came into existence ([http://rdz.acor.org/gestalt!](http://rdz.acor.org/gestalt!/)), and it spawned numerous other sites through its organizational structure of an editorial board (whose goal was to behave as ambassadors bringing their relative Gestalt communities to the world via the internet). Gerhard Stemberger, one of the associate editors, utilized the resources made available through Gestalt! to inaugurate a site devoted to the The Society for Gestalt Theory and its Applications (GTA) (<http://rdz.acor.org/gestalt!/~gerhard/gta/gtax.html>). Lars Berg utilized these same resources to inaugurate Gestalt Gallery ([http://rdz.acor.org/gestalt!/~berg/gestalt\\_gallery](http://rdz.acor.org/gestalt!/~berg/gestalt_gallery)), which is a place for the artistic expression of Gestalt values and philosophy on the web, and Gestalt Information (<http://rdz.acor.org/gestalt!/~berg/gestaltinformation>), which is a site specifically for the people of Sweden to learn about Gestalt therapy and the Gestalt resources available to them there. Myriam Munoz placed her institute in Mexico City on the internet using these same resources

([http://rdz.acor.org/gestalt!/~myriam/inst\\_humanista](http://rdz.acor.org/gestalt!/~myriam/inst_humanista)). Work continues to develop sites for others. Early in 1997 The Gestalt Journal began collaborating with Behavior OnLine to develop a bulletin-board styled web conferencing site for Gestalt therapy (<http://www.behavior.net/mhn/bolforum/message/23>). In mid 1997 Gestalt Global Corporation formed on a not-for-profit basis to facilitate extended learning of process-experiential psychotherapy and its applications (<http://www.g-g.org/gestalt-global>) using web technology. They will facilitate the sale of Gestalt-related literature by creating an on-line bookstore in which articles from hard copy Gestalt journals around the world will be made available, and a database will list content available for research. They have instituted Process Experiential Net (<http://www.g-g.org/pen>), an on-line forum for the professional level discussion of various issues, starting with the subject of research, discussed by Leslie Greenberg and his students from York University in Toronto, Ontario. In addition, Gestalt Global has taken over the publication of Gestalt! and they will feature special issues on the conferences held by the Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy and the European Association of Gestalt Therapy (EAGT). In the future they intend to market extended learning modules for use via the web and to incorporate free standing computer applications created specifically for Gestalt-related work. In regard to this, work is proceeding on a training , in CD format, to help educational therapists deal with academic performance anxiety; it reflects the work of Gestalt therapists at Pepperdine University.

No one could have predicted this rapid emergence of Gestalt-related sites. In just two years the self-organized growth has been in excess of 500 per cent (see Figure 2).

1995 Gestalt Presence

AAGT Web site	Articles by Lars Berg from <i>The Weaver</i>
AAGT's email discussion list	Two or three isolated, and individual practitioners
Gestalt Journal Web site	

1997 Gestalt Presence

The Gestalt Journal's web site:

- Behavior OnLine's forum on Gestalt therapy (in partnership with TGJ)
- The Web site for the International Gestalt Therapy Association (IGTA)
- The Cape Cod Institute's workshops on Gestalt therapy

Gestalt Global Corporation's web enterprises:

- Gestalt!*, the electronic journal with full text articles.
- Gestalt Bookmarks (a one-stop, table of web contents for links on sites related to Gestalt therapy).

Process Experiential Net (PEN) (Professional level discussion)

Literature Retrieval Services - listing of contents and some abstracts for the following hard copy Gestalt Journals: *The Nordic Gestalt Journal*, *Gestalt Theory*, *Gestalt Review*, *British Gestalt Journal*; *Figure/Ground: Journal of the Inst. Humanista de Psicoterapia Gestalt*, *Australian Gestalt Journal*

Web hosting and site management: The New York Institute for Gestalt Therapy; The AAGT's web site; The Gestalt Therapy Institute of Los Angeles

Gestalt Critique (an online magazine of Gestalt therapy, politics, and spirituality)

The Society for Gestalt Theory and its Applications (GTA) (Austria/ Germany)

European Association for Gestalt Therapy (EAGT)

Gestalt Education Network International (GENI) (Germany)

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|--|--|
| * AAGT email discussion list                                   | * Gestalt-L email discussion list (with web site & archives; linked to Spanish and Portuguese Gestalt lists) |
| * Portland Gestalt Therapy Training Institute                  | * The Gestalt Center of Gainesville  |
| * Gestalt Institute of Santa Cruz                              | * Gestalt Center of New Mexico   |
| * Gestalt Growth Center of Santa Cruz                          | * Centro de Estudos Atividades de Gestalticas (Brazil)   |
| * Instituto di Gestalt (Italy)                                 | * Institute Humanista de Psicoterapia Gestalt AC (Mexico)  |
| * The Centre for Gestalt Development in Organizations (the UK) | * Northern Rivers Gestalt Institute (Australia)  |
| * Institut Francais de Gestalt-therapie (France)               |  |
| * Gestaltinformation (Sweden)                                  |  |
| * Gestalt Gallery (Sweden)                                     |  |
| * Gestalt Therapy Inst. of Cologne (Germany)                   |  |

Figure 2: Growth in gestalt presence on the internet

Since the rate of expansion is increasing, it is no exaggeration to suspect that the internet will play a significant role in a renaissance of Gestalt psychotherapy in the larger field. Already, The Gestalt Journal, through its association and support of the International Gestalt Therapy Association (IGTA), is making connections with larger non-Gestalt associations devoted to psychotherapy. Gestalt Global is establishing relationships with the APA and several university training centers in order to stimulate interest in process-experiential work. Certainly, one thing is unavoidable, the field is experiencing both forceful change in the form of the impact of the internet in the substantive layer, and it's enduring conflict as individual Gestalt practitioners exhibit various contact styles in accord with their perception of expanding internet influence. The rate and volume of internet Gestalt-related activity increases, and the field is organizing around attractors such as The Gestalt Journal - Behavior OnLine, Gestalt Global Corporation - Gestalt! hubs. The energy that fuels competition among these various entities will lead to greater development of web-based resources. It will also motivate increased internet utilization as a means of expressing and developing Gestalt identity. More Gestalt practitioners will learn how to make their own web pages, and they will begin advertising themselves and their training communities to colleagues in the larger field of mental health, psychology and psychotherapy using the world wide web. The questions about whether or not contact is possible on the internet will become moot as people experience it there and learn how to handle the idiom. Just as no one could have forecast two years ago that we would be here, no one

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can accurately see two more years into the future. One thing is strongly suspected; it will continue to grow, to change, and to both enrich and condense the field.

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## Appendix A

Vita

## PHILIP BROWNELL

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Portland, OR 97218  
(phone 503.335.3867; email brownell@europa.com)

### EDUCATION:

1995-98	Portland Gestalt Therapy Training Institute, Portland, OR	Training in Gestalt Therapy
1995-98	George Fox University, Newberg, OR	Psy. D. student
1993-95	George Fox College, Newberg, OR	MA, Clinical Psychology
1977-80	Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, OR	Master of Divinity Pastoral Emphasis
1973-76	California State University, Sacramento, CA	Bachelor of Arts, Psychology
1971-73	American River College Sacramento, CA	Undergraduate Work
1967-68	Hospital Corps School; Neuropsychiatric Tech. School, U.S. Navy; Oakland, CA	Certificate in Psychiatric Nursing

### CLINICAL EXPERIENCE:

- **Psychologist Intern** (under the supervision of Craig Montgomery, Ph.D., and Susan Schradle, Ph.D.) - 1997-98, **Caremark Behavioral Healthcare (Portland Adventist Medical Center)**.  
Did psychological assessments, co-facilitated process groups, conducted individual psychotherapy, attended treatment planning, consulted with caseworkers, court investigators, nursing staff, and psychiatrists, documented patient progress. (Typical disorders encountered include major depression, bipolar disorders, schizophrenia, including substance induced psychosis, dissociative disorders, PTSD, alcohol, amphetamine, cocaine, opiate and polysubstance-related disorders.)
- **Therapist (practicum) (work) - Pacific Gateway Hospital**. From June, 1994 through August of 1998. ). Consult Lolly Wagner (503-538-2975; 234-5353), previous charge nurse on ICU, current weekend nursing supervisor.  
Responsible for crisis intervention, individual and group psychotherapy (process, psychoeducational, & experiential approaches), and milieu management. Conducted short-term focus groups on chemical dependency, family issues, process of treatment, role of emotions,

relapse prevention, and self awareness. Participated in treatment planning and helped develop the program by initiating several groups, including the use of Gestalt group therapy. (Typical disorders encountered include dysthymia, major depression, bipolar diseases, schizophrenia, including substance-induced psychosis, dissociative disorders, PTSD, various paraphilias and gender identity disorders, eating disorders, agoraphobia, alcohol, amphetamine, cocaine, opiate and polysubstance-related disorders.)

- **Therapist (practicum) - William Temple House, community mental health center.**  
From 1995-1996; supervised by Susan Bettis, Ph.D.  
Conducted individual and couples psychotherapy. (Typical disorders include major depression, adjustment, marital and relational problems.)
- **Therapist (practicum) - Sellwood Outpatient Clinic and Partial Hospitalization Program.** From 1994 to 1995; supervised by Mike Terry, Psy.D.  
Responsible for individual and group psychotherapy. (Typical disorders include major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, dissociative disorders, PTSD, eating disorders, and polysubstance-related disorders.)
- **Child Specialist (work) - The Babson Cottage at The Christie School, Marylhurst, Oregon.** From 1993-1994  
Supervised emotionally disturbed adolescents in a residential treatment program - overnight shift, which included morning routines. (Typically adolescents there for assessment, from other treatment facilities or institutions; many of them were gang affiliated, involved with violent acting out or were neglected and living on the street, involved with prostitution and drug use.)
- **Minister/Pastoral Counselor (work) -** From 1977-1990.  
Counseled people with regard to a number of issues, but most focused on marriage, aging, death, and grieving. Worked extensively with people in small groups. Was a minister of children, overseeing 300 children and a staff of 100. Some duties also included services and meetings with residents in convalescent and retirement facilities in California and Oregon. Also served as a consultant to the hospice program in Tillamook Oregon..
- **Line staff (work) -**  
For **Lincoln Child Center**, Oakland, CA (pre-adolescent children, ward's of the court; encountered abuse and neglect issues, relational problems, and ADHD), **Serendipity Treatment Center**, Sacramento, CA (adolescent children - encountered oppositional defiant and conduct disorders, along with PTSD), and **Everett Gladman Memorial Hospital** (adult and adolescent psychiatric patients - full range of disorders, including mood disturbances, psychoses, and substance abuse).

- **Neuropsychiatric Technician (work)** - From 1967-1969, with the U.S. Navy during the Viet Nam war, serving at Oakland Naval Hospital.  
For two years led or co-led groups, did individual counseling and military management, passed medications, attended to other nursing procedure with a population of acute men, and also supervised the work of other NP techs. while functioning as Sr. Corpman. (Typical disorders involved PTSD, Paranoia, Schizophrenia, Malingering, Chemical Abuse/ Addiction, and Personality Disorders.) Utilized Transactional Analysis and Gestalt approaches, learned on-the-job from members of the San Francisco Gestalt Institute (1967-69).

RELEVANT COURSEWORK:

- Family Therapy (survey of various approaches)
- Child and Adolescent Development
- Adult Development and Aging
- Object Relations Psychotherapy
- Experiential Psychotherapy (with segments on family sculpting and psychodrama)
- Cognitive-Behavioral Psychotherapy (with emphasis on treatment planning)
- Women's Issues In Psychotherapy
- Men's Issues In Psychotherapy
- Program Evaluation
- Pre-Internship Supervision of practicum students (one full year)
- Various Assessment courses (cognitive, personality, neuropsych, and projectives)
- Abnormal Psychology (including use of DSM-IV)
- Dream Interpretation

COLLATERAL TRAINING:

- 1995 international conference for the Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy (AAGT):
  1. Two-hour workshop with Dr. Willi Butollo, University of Munich "Gestalt-Based Post Traumatic Therapy: A Seminar In Bosnia"
  2. Two-hour workshop with Bridget Farrands, "Contact and Leadership In Organizational Settings"
  3. Two-hour workshop with Iris Fodor, Ph.D., "Integrating Cognitive and Gestalt Therapy: Making Meaning of Experience"
  4. Two-hour workshop with Richard Erskine, Ph.D., "Inquiry, Attunement and Involvement: Methods of Gestalt Therapy"
- 1996 Half-Day workshop with David S. Freedman, D.SW., author of *Multigenerational Family Therapy*.
- 1997 international conference for the AAGT
  1. All-day, pre-conference workshop with John Carter, Ph.D. and Veronica Hopper Carter, Ph.D., "Intervening in Organizations...A Gestalt Approach"

2. Two-hour workshop with Rachel Brier, Ed.D., "Gestalt Reflecting Team Model for Advanced Training"
  3. Two-hour workshop with Mark McConville, Ph.D., "Adolescent Development and Psychotherapy: A Gestalt Approach"
- 1997 two-hour tour and explanation of the treatment program for federal prisoners at the Federal Correctional Institution in Butner, North Carolina, by Edward Landis, Ph.D., Director of Training, Psychology Services.
  - 1998 International conference for the AAGT
    1. Two-hour workshop with Lois Meredith, Ph.D. "We Are What We Say: Creating Ourselves Through Voice and Language."
    2. Two-hour workshop with James Kepner, Ph.D. "Healing Trauma: Healing Tasks and Body Process."
    3. Two-hour workshop with Robert Lee, Ph.D. "Shame and Support: Treating the Intimate Couple."

#### TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

- **Training Faculty** (1997-98) for the Gestalt Training Institute of San Francisco and the Gestalt Institute of Santa Cruz.
- **Trainer** - 1997, lead a brief workshop on the Gestalt approach to dream work for the Graduate School of Clinical Psychology, George Fox University.
- **Assistant Trainer** - 1998, co-lead weekend training in Gestalt Therapy at the Esalen Institute, Big Sur, California.
- **Guest lecturer**, (1998), spoke regarding the historical development, theoretical system, and contemporary field of Gestalt therapy for the History and Systems class at the Graduate School of Clinical Psychology, George Fox University.
- **Guest Instructor**, (1997-98), spoke regarding the role of a clinical psychologist, the importance of contact and support in relating to patients, and conducted experiential sessions in the form of mock process groups for students at the Walla Walla School of Nursing. (repeated in each quarter for those students entering their rotation in psychology)
- **Presenter:**
  - Brownell, P. (1994) Self-Conscious Affect, Paper presented at the meeting of the Northwest Regional Social Sciences Conference held at George Fox University.
  - Brownell, P. (1996) Relationship Between Psychology and Christianity, Presentation given in chapel forum at Western Seminary.
  - Brownell, P. (1996) Internet Involvement, presentation to the student body of the Graduate School of Clinical Psychology at George Fox University.
  - Brownell, P. (1997) Condensing the Field: Internet Communication and Gestalt Community, presented at the 1997 international conference of the

Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy (AAGT), San Francisco, California.

Brownell, P. (1998) Because of You...: A Gestalt Therapy Perspective on Relationships. Presented as a six-hour workshop on dialogical, interpersonal, and transpersonal work at the Esalen Institute, Big Sur, California.

Brownell, P., O'Neill, B., Goodlander, M., Stemberger, G., Maheu, M., Berg, L. (1998) Field in Flux: Gestalt in the World through Internet Technology. Co-chaired an international panel presented at the 1998 international conference of the AAGT, Cleveland, Ohio.

Brownell, P. (submitted for 1999) Gestalt in the Hospital: Bridging to Brief, Residential Therapy, 1999 AAGT conference, New York, New York.

Janoff, D. & Brownell, P. (submitted for 1999) Creating Virtual Work Teams in Healthcare: A Gestalt Perspective, 1999 AAGT conference, New York, New York.

- **Instructor** - Simpson College: from 1982-84 taught two sections of Koine Greek.
- **Pastor/teacher** - For thirteen years (1977-1990) conducted weekly workshops, teacher trainings, classes, and preached sermons to small and large groups ranging from six to 2,000 people (depending on the circumstances). This included a brief experience of radio scriptwriting and broadcasting.

#### PUBLISHING:

- Bergantino, L., Brownell, P. (1998) "You can't do that anymore" *Gestalt!*, vol. 2, no. 1. Available on-line [http://rdz.acor.org/gestalt!/2\(1\)](http://rdz.acor.org/gestalt!/2(1))
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- Brownell, P. (1997) "Gestalt Bookmarks." Listing of on-line sources related to core principles in Gestalt therapy theory, prepared in conjunction with presentation

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  - Greenberg, L., Brownell, P. (1996) Validating gestalt: An interview with researcher, writer, and psychotherapist, Leslie Greenberg\*. (included in the first issue of *Gestalt!* available on-line: [http://rdz.acor.org/gestalt!/1\(1\)/greenberg.html](http://rdz.acor.org/gestalt!/1(1)/greenberg.html)).

#### ADMINISTRATION:

- **Member of the Executive Committee** of the Board of Directors and Publications Editor for the Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy (AAGT). Oversee publishing and help guide the direction of this international association of psychotherapists.
- **President, Gestalt Global Corporation** (<http://www.g-g.org/gestalt-global>), a not-for-profit corporation in existence to facilitate extended learning of process-experiential psychotherapies. We also publish an electronic journal archived at Sheffield University (England) and The American Cancer Society (New York), and develop computer applications to facilitate students in various venues, ranging from major universities to small treatment centers.
- **Sr. Editor, *Gestalt!*** (<http://rdz.acor.org/gestalt/>), a reviewed, electronic journal with an international board of associate editors.
- **Chair** of the AAGT special interest group on internet involvement and utilization.
- **Co-Chair, Program Committee** for the 1997 international conference for the AAGT (in San Francisco). Information on the magnitude of this project is available on-line at: [http://www.g-g.org/aagt/conference\\_online.html](http://www.g-g.org/aagt/conference_online.html)



- **Pastoral Ministry** - For thirteen years (1977-1990) served as **administrative head** of various church ministries, including a large children's ministry (300 children, with a staff of over 100), and as pastor of two churches.

#### REFERENCES

- Craig Montgomery, Ph.D. (503- 661-7733) on-site internship supervisor for clinical work at Portland Adventist Hospital.
- Carol Swanson, LCSW (503-224-3833) or Maya Brand (503-223-7620) Co-directors of the Portland Gestalt Therapy Training Institute
- Nan Narboe, MSW (503-221-9760), trainer in Gestalt group process, adjunct faculty, Portland Gestalt Therapy Training Institute
- Susan Schradle, Ph.D. Clinical psychologist, director of the internship program for Caremark Behavioral Health (503-287-7006)
- Kathleen Kleiner, Ph.D. Professor in the Graduate School of Clinical Psychology at George Fox University, child development researcher (503-538-8383)