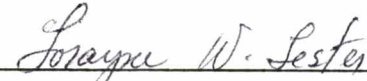


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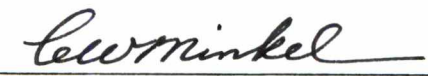
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Elizabeth Long Durrett entitled "Frederick Perls' Gestalt Therapy--Implications for Interpersonal Communications." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Speech and Theatre.


M. L. Ambrester, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:




Accepted for the Council:


The Graduate School

FREDERICK PERLS' GESTALT THERAPY--IMPLICATIONS FOR
INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Elizabeth Long Durrett

August 1983

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to discover if the principles of Gestalt Therapy as described by Frederick Perls can be used to enhance the existing instructional material in interpersonal communication. Of particular interest is the concept of "self" as it is approached by both Perls and interpersonal authors. This is done by examining the therapeutic techniques developed by Perls for self growth and then examining the coverage of self concepts in interpersonal texts. In this way information may be obtained as to the relevance of correlating the Perls and interpersonal material on self.

A brief introduction to interpersonal communication and Gestalt Therapy is offered. Both concepts are then more fully explored. The concepts of Gestalt Therapy explored include introjection, projection, retroflection, and topdog/underdog. Sixteen representative interpersonal texts are then examined paying particular attention to the categories of self and interpersonal communication, self awareness, self concept, self acceptance, self assertion, self actualization, and self disclosure. Distinct problems are encountered in examining the interpersonal texts as the authors of these texts were often ambiguous in using the terms listed above.

All of the interpersonal texts mentioned self processes as well as asserted the idea of self growth as being important to developing good interpersonal communication. The authors of these texts were not, however, exhaustive in explaining why the student was not achieving a

good self concept, reaching self acceptance, etc. In addition, much of the material used in the interpersonal texts dealing with the self was repetitive. The material on self offered by Perls was found to offer fresh, more extensive information. Similarly, it was determined that this information can be correlated to enhance the already existing information on self in interpersonal texts.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The field of interpersonal communication has blossomed in the last decade. The mounting number of texts and articles written on the subject offer overwhelming support to the fact that interpersonal communication is a strong and viable area in the field of speech communication. Charles Berger recognizes this same emphasis as he states that:

Whatever the reason or reasons, relatively few traditional persuasion studies appear on convention programs or in communication journals today. Replacing such research are studies which focus more frequently upon negotiation and cooperation in interpersonal communication, rather than upon face to face communication events where persuasion and social influence take place.¹

One of the first extensive attempts at systematically approaching the area of interpersonal communication was made in 1968 by Dean Barnlund. His book Interpersonal Communication: Survey and Studies² has been the basis from which the majority of scholars writing in this area have developed and expanded. Similarly, his description of the interpersonal communication setting has become a classic definition refined throughout the interpersonal literature. For this reason, the writer offers

¹Charles R. Berger, "Interpersonal Communication Theory and Research: An Overview," in Communication Yearbook I, ed. Brent D. Ruben (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1977), p. 217.

²Dean C. Barnlund, Interpersonal Communication: Survey and Studies (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968).

Barnlund's overview of interpersonal communication as a means for gaining an understanding of this area of speech communication.

Barnlund suggests that there are five characteristics inherent in the interpersonal communication setting. These characteristics are:

1. The presence of two or more individuals in physical proximity
2. A reciprocal nature
3. An exchange of messages
4. Face to face encounters
5. Largely unstructured situations³

The first of these characteristics states that in an interpersonal communication situation there must be two or more people in physical proximity. This does not mean that the mere presence of individuals in the same room implies an interpersonal setting. Inherent in this characteristic is that the individuals must be aware of each other. Barnlund notes that, "As each perceives the other, he becomes aware of being perceived."⁴ There must be some sort of awareness or "perceptual engagement" within the situation.

Although Barnlund believes this characteristic to be a prerequisite to interpersonal communication, he says that the process goes beyond mere perception. The second characteristic involves a reciprocal nature. The individual does things or says things that are a direct consequence of what another person has done or said. Barnlund says that:

³Barnlund, pp. 8-10.

⁴Barnlund, p. 8.

Involvement in an interpersonal engagement, then, requires that participants be able to supply cues for others to act on, be reasonably responsive to the cues provided by others, and be capable of weaving these two coding activities into an appropriate pattern.⁵

This type of reciprocity affords interpersonal communication which is based on a common ground. The action of one individual depends on the action of another person within a particular situation.

The third characteristic of interpersonal communication is that there is an exchange of messages. There is not only awareness of the other and there are not only cues being reciprocated, but there is a cognitive process of interpretation. According to Barnlund, "The study of interpersonal communication would seem, therefore, to require careful analysis of message forms and message effects."⁶ This analysis includes appropriate interpretations of both verbal and nonverbal cues. The individual must be able not only to encode the message but also to, "interpret from the vantage point of the receiver."⁷ In this way there will be an exchange of messages.

Interpersonal communication usually occurs in face to face encounters. This characteristic enables individuals to "confront each other totally."⁸ The face to face presence of each individual thwarts any restrictions that might occur in other settings such as television, radio, or telephone. These settings offer high probability for a restriction on the cues supplied and/or the feedback element. Face to

⁵Barnlund, p. 9.

⁶Barnlund, p. 9.

⁷Barnlund, p. 9.

⁸Barnlund, p. 10.

face encounters enhance the probability of total communication by allowing for explicit cues as well as feedback.

The final characteristic of the interpersonal communication setting as described by Barnlund is that these settings are largely unstructured. He notes that:

Participants decide to speak when they choose and to whom they choose. Each person edits his messages to conform to his changing needs,⁹ and each selectively responds to the messages of others.

The rules of interpersonal communication are few. This results in interpersonal communication being relatively informal and spontaneous.

Barnlund concisely concludes his ideas of what interpersonal communication is in the following quotation:

The study of interpersonal communication, then, is concerned with the investigation of relatively informal social situations in which persons in face to face encounters sustain a focused interaction¹⁰ through the reciprocal exchange of verbal and nonverbal cues.

Equally important to this thesis is an understanding of the basic principles of Gestalt Therapy as conceived by Frederick Perls. Frederick Perls writes that for him, gestalt is a concept of growth.¹¹ The word "gestalt" comes from the German language and has no exact English translation.¹² As defined in the Dictionary of Psychology, Gestalt is, "an integration of members as contrasted with a summation of

⁹Barnlund, p. 10.

¹⁰Barnlund, p. 10.

¹¹Frederick Perls, Ralph F. Hefferline, and Paul Goodman, Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality (New York: Bantam Books, 1951), p. ix.

¹²Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. xvi.

parts."¹³ Gestalt is most generally translated as "whole." Gestalt Therapy deals with the idea that the individual often lives with "unfinished situations"--feelings that he has not yet dealt with. He tucks these feelings away deep inside of him instead of facing them and putting them into proper perspective. The purpose in Gestalt Therapy is that it affords an avenue by which the individual can deal with these buried feelings which, as Perls points out, is integral to the growth process.

In order to be open to the concepts of Gestalt Therapy, one must first understand that not being able to deal with certain feelings does not mean that a person is "neurotic." Everyone comes in contact with feelings and situations that they are either not ready or not able to deal with. In The Gestalt Approach & Eye Witness to Therapy, Perls states that:

. . . we have become phobic toward pain and suffering. Anything that is not fun or pleasant is to be avoided. So we run away from any frustration that might be painful and try to shortcut it. And the result is a lack of growth. When I talk about the readiness to encounter unpleasantness, I certainly do not mean an education towards masochism . . . I'm talking about the suffering that goes along with growing up. I'm talking about facing honestly unpleasant situations. And this is very much linked with the Gestalt approach.¹⁴

Similarly, Perls emphasizes in Gestalt Therapy that, "I now consider that neurosis is not a sickness but one of several symptoms of growth

¹³Howard C. Warren, Dictionary of Psychology (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), pp. 114-15.

¹⁴Fritz Perls, The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy (New York: Bantam Books, 1973), pp. 120-21.

stagnation."¹⁵ Perls frequently uses the term neurotic in this way. A person's inability to cope does not mean that he is neurotic or "sick." It merely means that he is suffering a blockage in his growth process. Perls calls these blockages within the individual "disturbances." He believes that:

The basic principle underlying these disturbances is the environmental demand to be what he is not, the demand to actualize an ideal rather than to actualize himself. He becomes lopsided. some of his potential is then alienated, repressed, projected. Other characteristics are put on as phony behavior, requiring strain with self support, exhaustion without satisfaction.¹⁶

Because the individual's growth has been thwarted, largely by his environment, he is unable to actualize himself. He runs in vain. In order to truly exist, to run in earnest, one must "learn to take a stand, to develop one's center."¹⁷ This same idea of a dynamic growth process is revealed in the Gestalt Therapy Prayer:

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.¹⁸

The question then arises, "How do you find you or I find I?" Perls believes that Gestalt Therapy can aid this process:

¹⁵Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. ix.

¹⁶Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. x.

¹⁷Frederick S. Perls, Gestalt Therapy Verbatim (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), p. 4.

¹⁸Perls, Verbatim, p. 4.

In therapy, we have not only to get through the role playing. We also have to fill in the holes in the personality to make the person whole and complete again. And again . . . this can't be done by the turner-onners. In Gestalt Therapy we have a better way, but it is no magic shortcut. You don't have to be on a couch or in a Zendo for twenty or thirty years,¹⁹ but you have to invest yourself and it takes time to grow.

Inherent in Perls' "better way" for fostering growth are two premises: (1) working in the here and now and (2) awareness. The following quotation from The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy succinctly explains how these two premises work in Gestalt Therapy:

Gestalt Therapy is experiential therapy, rather than a verbal or an interpretive therapy. We ask our patients not to talk about their traumas and their problems in the removed area of the past tense and memory, but to re-experience their problems and their traumas--which are their unfinished situations in the present--in the here and now. If the patient is finally to close the book on his past problems, he must close it in the present. For he must realize that if his past problems were really past, these would no longer be problems--and they certainly would not be present.

In addition, as an experiential therapy, the Gestalt technique demands of the patient that he experience as much of himself as he can, that he experience himself as fully as he can in the here and now. We ask the patient to become aware of his gestures, of his breathing, of his emotions, of his voice, and of his facial expressions as much as his pressing thoughts. We know that the more he becomes aware of himself, the more he will learn about what his self is. As he experiences the ways in which he prevents himself from "being" now--the ways in which he interrupts himself--²⁰ he will also begin to experience the self he has interrupted.

The two premises of the here and now and awareness are very closely related and it therefore becomes difficult to draw a clear line between

¹⁹Perls, Verbatim, p. 2.

²⁰Perls, The Gestalt Approach, pp. 64-5.

them. Even Perls has trouble distinguishing between the two as he offers the following equation:

$$\text{Now} = \text{experience} = \text{awareness} = \text{reality}^{21}$$

However, in order to present a thorough explanation, of these two premises, each are discussed separately and then in relation to each other.

In learning to work in the here and how one must realize that although he may act as he does because of something that happened in the past, ". . . his difficulties today are connected with the way he is acting today."²² The person can realize that he acts a certain way because of something in this past but he must deal with the consequences this action has now. Perls writes that:

The past is past. And yet--in the now, in our being, we carry much of the past with us only as far as we have unfinished situations. What happened in the past is either assimilated and has become a part of us or we carry around an unfinished situation, an incomplete gestalt.²³

An example of this is if the parent who does not keep "open lines of communication" between himself and his child. The parent says, "I do this because my parents believed children should be seen and not heard." This may be true but he cannot continue to place the blame on his

²¹Frederick S. Perls, "Four Lectures," in Gestalt Therapy Now: Theory, Techniques, Applications, eds. Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepard (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 14.

²²Perls, The Gestalt Approach, p. 63.

²³Perls, Verbatim, p. 45.

parents or use his parents as an irrefutable excuse for not communicating with his own children. The consequences of the "seen and not heard" proverb is in the now: the parent now cannot talk with his own child. He must stop blaming the past for his actions and take responsibility for his present actions. He must control the situation now rather than letting the situation past control him.

The second premise in Gestalt Therapy is that of awareness. Perls believes that:

Many of the neurotic's difficulties are related to his unawareness, his blind spots, to the things and relationships he simply does not sense. And therefore, rather than talking of the unconscious, we prefer to talk about the at-this-moment-unaware.²⁴

The aware provides something in addition to the conscious. In keeping with Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson's axiom that one cannot not communicate,²⁵ Perls believes that one cannot not be aware. Even if an individual says he feels nothing, he is at least aware of the nothing.²⁶ In Gestalt Therapy, the individual is guided into awareness of himself. Perls notes that, "Without awareness there is nothing."²⁷ This same advocacy is seen in one of his students, Barry Stevens, as she writes,

²⁴Perls, The Gestalt Approach, p. 54.

²⁵Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin, and Don Jackson, Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967).

²⁶Perls, Verbatim, p. 14.

²⁷Frederick S. Perls, In and Out the Garbage Pail (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), p. 69.

"'Awareness is the ABC of Gestalt!--Fritz.'"²⁸ When something is "not right" within the individual--when he is unable to grow--the first step towards change and growth is for him to become aware of his need for change and growth. Perls states that:

By concentrating on each symptom, each area of awareness, the patient learns several things about himself and his neurosis. He learns what he is actually experiencing. he learns how he experiences it. And he learns how his feelings and behavior in one²⁹ area are related to his feelings and behavior in other areas.

The concept of awareness is fairly simple and yet its importance is that of mammoth proportion. Several specific areas for concentrating awareness will be discussed in Chapter III. Commenting on the importance of the concept of awareness, the editors of Gestalt Therapy

Now write:

Thus the general approach of Gestalt theory and therapy requires the patient to specify the changes in himself that he desires, assists him in increasing his awareness of how he defeats himself, and aids him in experimenting and changing. Blocks in awareness and behavior emerge in the same way that they manifest themselves in the person's life; and his relief as he becomes able to expand his experience and behavior³⁰ are felt immediately in increases in capacity for living.

Gestalt Therapy works to make the individual aware in the here and now. Awareness is always connected with the present. The individual can not be truly aware of the past or of the future. He may be aware

²⁸ Barry Stevens, Don't Push the River (Lafayette, Ca.: Real People Press, 1970), p. 130.

²⁹ Perls, The Gestalt Approach, p. 68.

³⁰ Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepard, eds., Gestalt Therapy Now: Theory, Techniques, Applications (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 2.

of memories of the past or anticipation of the future but he is aware here and now. Perls says that:

Through making our patients aware, in the here and now, by concentration, of what these interruptions are, of how these interruptions affect them, we can bring them to real integrations We can give them a chance to be themselves, because they will begin to experience themselves; this will give them a true appreciation both of themselves and others, and will enable them to make good contact with the world, because they will know where the world is. Understanding means, basically, seeing a part in its relation to the whole. For our patients, it means seeing themselves as part of the total field and thus becoming related both to themselves and to the world.³¹

By becoming aware of unfinished situations--incomplete gestalts--and finishing them in the present, the individual is made whole. He no longer has bits and pieces of himself spread throughout his past but rather is a complete whole, now. This enables the individual to place himself in proper perspective with his current environment. The result is a dynamic individual who is able to relate most accurately with himself and his world.

These summations of interpersonal communication theory and the fundamental principles of Gestalt Therapy are the basis of the three questions to be explored in this thesis. Those questions are:

1. How do the principles of Gestalt Therapy as described by Frederick Perls address the concepts of self?
2. How is the concept of the self being covered in the instructional material on interpersonal communication?

³¹Perls, The Gestalt Approach, p. 73.

3. Can the principles of Gestalt Therapy dealing with self be used to further contribute to the instructional material in interpersonal communication?

The Rationale

In exploring the versatility of Gestalt Therapy as conceived by Frederick Perls, Gerald Kogan uncovered a quotation from The Techniques of Gestalt Therapy written by Naranjo. The quote reads:

Gestalt techniques . . . cover a wide spectrum of behaviors--verbal and non-verbal, structured and unstructured, introspective and inter-personal, inner and outer-directed, symbolic and non-symbolic.³²

Naranjo's statement is true. The theory generated by Perls may help lead to an enhancement especially of the areas of interpersonal communication.

Frederick Perls' first book entitled Ego, Hunger and Aggression appeared in 1947. His next book was written with Ralph Hefferline and Paul Goodman in 1951 and was entitled Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality. Perls other works include Gestalt Therapy Verbatim (1969), In and Out the Garbage Pail (1969), and The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy (1973). The latter of these books was a compilation of two manuscripts written by Perls and published after his death. Perls has enjoyed an increasing popularity in the fields of psychology and social psychology. His founding of

³²Gerald Kogan, "The History, Philosophy and Practice of Gestalt Therapy: Theory of Human Nature and Conduct in Frederick Perls' Psychology" (Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1973), p. 5.

Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, became an egress for the spreading of Gestalt Therapy in the United States. According to the Social Sciences Citation Index, between 1966 and 1970 Perls was cited fifty-eight times in journal articles and then between 1971 and 1975 he was cited 259 times.

Many ideas in the field of speech communication have grown out of psychology taking counseling techniques from the couch to the communicating public. In surveying some of the current texts being used in the area of interpersonal communication, the writer compiled a list of seven of the most well known authors in the field of psychology that were frequently cited in these interpersonal texts. These authors include such prestigious names as Eric Berne, Erving Goffman, T. A. Harris, Sidney Jourard, R. D. Laing, Theodore Roszak, and Carl Rogers. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the possibility of including Frederick Perls in this list. By using the methodology described below, the writer will determine if the principles of Gestalt Therapy as conceived by Frederick Perls can be used to enrich the interpersonal communication instructional material.

The Methodology

This chapter began with a classic definition of what interpersonal communication entails and included the basic principles of Gestalt Therapy. Chapter II begins with a brief biography of Perls and offers information as to his connection with the field of speech and theatre. The latter portion of this chapter is devoted to an examination of theories in Gestalt Therapy that deal with the self processes. These

theories include perceptual restructuring devices and self torture games. Chapter III provides a survey of instructional material being used in the area of interpersonal communication. This representational selection of texts offers insight into what theories and ideas, particularly those dealing with self processes, are covered in the interpersonal material. Finally, Chapter IV will link the concepts of interpersonal communication seen in the interpersonal communication literature surveyed in Chapter III with the theories of Frederick Perls presented in Chapter II. In this way, the writer will determine if the ideas conceived by Perls can be used to enhance the instructional material in interpersonal communication.

CHAPTER II

FREDERICK PERLS--THE MAN AND HIS WORK

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to enable the reader to gain insight into Frederick Perls' personality and his work. This will be achieved by dividing the chapter into three segments: first a biographical sketch of Perls will be presented as a means of examining the nature of the development of his philosophy, second the communicative influences on Perls and the manifestations of these influences will be examined, and third, an explanation of some of Perls' therapeutic philosophy in Gestalt Therapy that will later be linked to interpersonal communication will be explicated.

Biographical Sketch

Because there are no concrete records regarding Frederick Perls' life, the best we can do is pull together information outlined in Martin Shepard's biography on Perls, Perls' autobiography In and Out the Garbage Pail, and extraneous information found in books and articles by friends of Perls. Friedrich Salomon Perls was born on July 8, 1893 outside of Berlin. Perls' relationship with the society in which he lived was somewhat antagonized due to his heritage: that of a German Jew. Not only did the societal environment work against him but also Perls experienced animosity from both his sister and his father. The animosity from his father was most severe. Being considered "bad" as an adolescent, his father often referred to him as a "piece of shit." Both

the social and family rejection Perls suffered apparently contributed to his extremely negative self-image.¹

Perls' early education took place in progressive schools such as Askanische gymnasium fostering his interest in theatre.² He later entered the University of Berlin to study medicine. This education was interrupted by World War I. As a medical student Perls was assigned the position of medic. The impact of war appeared devastating to Perls. Wanting desperately to be of service to the injured he became terribly dismayed when wounded Germans would not allow him to comfort wounded English.³ Martin Shepard in his biography of Perls entitled Fritz describes Perls agony during his enlistment:

Numbness was one result of his life as a soldier. He underwent periods of great detachment, depersonalization and for years lost capacity for inner imagery and fantasy. He went about his tasks as if in a trance, without apparent concern for his own survival. In 1917, he calmly walked into a railroad station to attend to casualties after the station and two nearby ammunition trains had been hit. On another occasion, under Allied bombing, he helped unload cases of ammunition, winning a medal while simultaneously manifesting his loss of emotional responsiveness.⁴

The war is another example of the debilitating influence society had on Perls. Nonetheless, Perls' strong desire to help others enabled him to gradually regain his ability for inner imagery and fantasy. The experience left Perls with a heightened sensitivity which later made him so effective in therapeutic encounters. After returning from the war

¹ Martin Shepard, Fritz (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1975), pp. 15-26.

² Shepard, p. 15.

³ Shepard, p. 26.

⁴ Shepard, p. 28.

Perls received his M.D. on April 3, 1920. From 1926 to 1932 he worked as a "certified Freudian psychoanalyst" in Frankfurt, Vienna, and Berlin.⁵ During this time he married Lore Posner who later anglicized her name to Laura.⁶ Fritz and Laura had two children, Seven and Renate, early in their marriage. It was during this early period of their marriage that the Perls began developing a philosophy of Gestalt Therapy. This philosophy was to guide Fritz's work throughout the rest of his life and while he denied an academic connection with what was known as gestalt psychology, many writers establish him as the father of Gestalt Therapy.⁷

Taking little responsibility for family (a trait learned from his own father), Fritz became a vagabond traveling to spread the concept of Gestalt Therapy. He established the South African Institute for Psychoanalysis in 1935, the New York Institute for Gestalt Therapy in 1952, and the Cleveland Institute for Gestalt Therapy in 1954.

Perls next venture was, perhaps, the most important move in his career. Hoping to find a liberal public for the reception of his ideas, Perls moved to California. Here he became involved with the founding of the Esalen Institute of Gestalt Therapy. During his years at Esalen, Perls gained the sense of credibility for which he seemed to be searching. Esalen, formally Chait's Hot Springs Hotel, was a cliffside community located in Big Sur, California. Created by Michael Murphy and

⁵ Shepard, p. 40.

⁶ Shepard, p. 35.

⁷ Among these writers are Gerald Kogan, Carl Rogers, Martin Shepard, William Shutz, and John Stevens.

Richard Price in 1961, ". . . the institute was the major center for humanistic psychology . . ." by 1965.⁸

Despite his overwhelming success at Esalen, Perls was, at first sight, resistant to the whole idea of Esalen. In his biography, Martin Shepard quotes Bernie Gunther, friend and associate of Perls, as saying that, "'He thought it was a screwed up place, pretty primitive, with a lot of dropouts running around.'" ⁹ Bernie finally convinced Perls to run a Gestalt Therapy training workshop for therapists at Big Sur. After a great deal of organization and publicity on the part of Bernie, Perls arrived at Esalen in 1964 to a crowd of people who had come solely to learn from him. This kind of recognition was what Perls had been yearning for. For the first time he was receiving a national recognition for his work in Gestalt Therapy and as Kogan noted, "During his residence at Esalen . . . Gestalt therapy became firmly established as the single most articulated western phenomenology."¹⁰ Consequently, Perls remained at Esalen holding workshops and basking in the attention from his many followers.

In discussing Perls and the other "gurus" leading workshops at Esalen during this period, Shepard says, "It was the very depth of their own alienation that impelled them to search for new ways of overcoming it, to replace interpersonal isolation with decent contact."¹¹ Shepard continues by describing the atmosphere at Esalen:

⁸Gerald Kogan, "The History, Philosophy and Practice of Gestalt Therapy: Theory of Human Nature and Conduct in Frederick Perls' Psychology," Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1973, p. 28.

⁹Shepard, p. 113.

¹⁰Kogan, G., p. 28.

¹¹Shepard, p. 117.

Those who live, work at, or visit Esalen profess a love of nature and man. Yet, the quality of love is offensive to Bible-thumping fundamentalists, for Esalen is a temple of sensuality as well as of the spirit.¹²

Adding to this perspective, Perls states:

Here at Esalen are quite a number of men to whom I feel warm and loving. I don't know if it is that the atmosphere attracts that special kind of person to whom I can relate, or that my capacity for love has increased.¹³

There was, however, one conflict for Perls in working at Esalen: he was not the only leader. Feeling that the competition was thwarting his refinement of the concepts inherent in Gestalt Therapy, he left Esalen after keeping resident there for five years and developed the Gestalt Institute of Canada in 1969.¹⁴ Here Perls felt he was surrounded by friends and admirers who yearned for his message and knowledge--not his job. Although it was here at Cowichan that Perls' personal and professional feelings of recognition were finally culminated, he was not around very long to enjoy it. Perls died one year after moving to Canada on March 14, 1970, of cancer of the pancreas. He was seventy-six. Perls' popularity at the time of his death is noted by the protection given him at the hospital where he died. Martin Shepard recognizes that, "The only other person to have warranted police protection at Weiss Memorial was Sammy Davis, Jr."¹⁵

¹² Shepard, p. 115.

¹³ Frederick S. Perls, In and Out the Garbage Pail (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), p. 237.

¹⁴ Shepard, p. 180.

¹⁵ Shepard, p. 1.

Frederick Perls was indeed a man whose complexity makes him difficult to explain. Of Perls, Shepard writes:

When I confine myself to thinking or process . . . I discover that my understanding of Fritz improves to the degree that I can suspend trying to understand him. If, on the other hand, I try to explain him in terms of some irreducible theory, he becomes unexplainable. Fritz, more than most people, was both simpler and more¹⁶ complex than any theoretical system would have us believe.

It is difficult to examine Perls' ideas and philosophies without wondering what made professionals and nonprofessionals alike embrace this man and his philosophy. The reason is as complex and ambiguous as Perls himself. Shepard analyzes that, "During this time, Fritz gave many people the gift of specialness."¹⁷ The man obviously had a certain charisma that was innate yet there seems to be two more concrete explanations for his appeal: (1) Perls' "plain talk" approach and (2) his empathy for suffering human beings. The meaning of "plain talk" approach becomes apparent when reading Perls' books. Perls says exactly what he has to say clearly, concisely, and without fear of contradiction. There are no false pretenses or spouts of verbiage used for the purpose of making an impression. Because of this, the student of Perls does not have to wade through piles of excess clauses in order to understand the real message.

The second explanation deals with Perls' empathetic qualities. As was shown in his frustration with World War I, Perls had a great distaste for suffering and an intense need to help those who were

¹⁶ Shepard, p. 169.

¹⁷ Shepard, p. 163.

suffering. Perls recognized the inner conflict caused from suffering and devised many of his therapeutic techniques from his awareness of this suffering. As indicated earlier his social and personal alienation helped promote this ability as suggested by Shepard in the following statement:

Fritz was a man who suffered greatly, in his life, from unrequited love. He had missed the love of his father, had played second or third fiddle for his mother's love, had had few friends as an adolescent, had lost his closest pal in the war, and had always experienced himself as an ugly toad. As he grew older, he learned to live without feeling close to his peers, his wife, or his children. He endured this deprivation by preaching, "I do my thing, you do yours If we meet it's beautiful. If not it can't be helped." Yet here he was--wanting, desiring, and needing another person--and unable to adopt his own "Truth" when his wishes weren't met.¹⁸

Because Perls was able to recognize these feelings within himself, he became intensely aware of similar feelings in other people as well. His innate sense of awareness was noted by many of his colleagues including psychologist Wilson Van Dusen. Perls not only worked with Van Dusen but also lived with him and his family. After an interview with Van Dusen, Shepard comments that, "Wilson . . . valued Fritz's unique ability to describe the obvious in both professional and social situations, his ability to capture the significance and implications of surface behavior."¹⁹ As a result, many of Perls' abilities toward understanding and awareness appeared in his therapeutic techniques such as introjection and topdog/underdog, both of which will be discussed later in this chapter. According to Shepard,

¹⁸ Shepard, p. 87.

¹⁹ Shepard, p. 98.

He obviously believed that Gestalt thinking would ease the self-torture and self-doubts of many people and contribute to more harmonious and less blaming interpersonal relations among people.²⁰

Influences

But how would Perls be able to achieve this harmony in interpersonal relationships? How could a man who, by his own admission, has just as many self-doubts and subjects himself to just as much self-torture as patients, teach others to become involved in harmonious, relations among people? The answer comes largely from the fact that Perls was open to a wide variety of ideas and therapeutic techniques. Shepard compares him to a vacuum cleaner sucking up new concepts from any and all areas of study and as Gerald Kogan points out:

European influences upon Frederick Perls included Freudian psychoanalysis, gestalt psychology, Wilhelm Reich, I. A. Richards, Sigmund Friedlander, Kurt Goldstein, and Jewish scholarship and mysticism.²¹

Also included in Kogan's list of influences is general semanticist Alfred Korzybski. In addition, Shepard notes that director Max Reinhardt, "was to make a lasting impression upon his young student (Perls) through his mastery of nuance, his use of dramatic silences and for creating moving images."²² Among this group I. A. Richards, Max Reinhardt, and Alfred Korzybski are of particular interest to this writer because their backgrounds in speech and theatre notably reflect upon Perls' communication orientation.

²⁰ Shepard, p. 173.

²¹ Kogan, G., p. x.

²² Shepard, p. 22.

One of the most far reaching influences affecting Fritz and his work was the world of theatre. Stemming from an interest developed in childhood, the artistry and magic of the theatre touched almost every phase of Fritz's Gestalt Therapy. Similarly, Fritz took an active role in almost every aspect of this highly communicative art form. As a young boy, he staged shows for his parents and later took part in community companies. By adolescence he was attaining "walk-on" parts at the Royal Theatre. Fritz's fascination and love of the theatre was so great that he refused payment for these roles.²³ Through his work as a thespian, Fritz was introduced to director and teacher Max Reinhardt. The knowledge imparted to Fritz by Reinhardt became an indelible foundation for the Gestalt Therapy techniques of creating a heightened awareness. Revealing the strong sense of theatre inherent in his nature (as well as his great affinity for playing the director²⁴), Perls' techniques for making clients more aware parallels Reinhardt's directing practices.

One influence of Reinhardt on Perls is recognized in Perls' ability to overlook the surface and return to what he calls the obvious. For Reinhardt, "'The final, the most satisfying impression my stage affords, is never what I achieve by working and rehearsing with the actors, it is the actor's own personality, the secret of his being.'"²⁵ For Perls,

²³ Shepard, p. 21.

²⁴ Shepard, p. 21.

²⁵ Gertrud Eysoldt, "How Reinhardt Works with His Actors," in Max Reinhardt and His Theatre, ed. Oliver M. Sayler (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1924), p. 99.

. . . there is so much invaluable material here, that we don't have to do anything else except get to the obvious, to the outmost surface, and feed²⁶ this back, so as to bring this into the patient's awareness.

This awareness comes alive from Reinhardt to Perls in both of their innate abilities to perceive the inner soul of another human being, reach that soul through disposing of the "lies" and getting to the obvious and then teaching the person to do the same with himself.

Another similarity that can be seen between Perls and Reinhardt is there drive and intensity when working with clients and actors. Sessions directed by both men become tedious examinations concluding in an overwhelming sense of achievement and awareness for the participants. One exercise used by Reinhardt that demonstrates this technique is described by his student Gertrud Eysoldt.

But the minute a sound in our voices betrays a rising of our spirits, he holds on to it tenaciously, and will not let it go. No falling back! He tortures us, drives us forward, resolves every doubt. He makes us repeat. Once more we hold the reins in our hands--tighten and loosen them, until we realize the rhythm of the pace. Once we are under way, all our repressions melt away. A rhythm of intensity and exhaustion²⁷ swings us in a circle. Reinhardt grasps it, and molds it.

Reinhardt pushes and pushes, building on each beat until, as Eysoldt recognizes, the group reaches the height or peak of their experience and fall in exhaustion. This same type of probing and driving intensity is also noted in Perls' dream therapy workshops. In these workshops, the

²⁶ Frederick S. Perls, Gestalt Therapy Verbatim (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), p. 57.

²⁷ Eysoldt, p. 100.

particular person working would be seated in what was known as the "hot seat." In front of or beside that seat was placed an empty chair in which the participant in the "hot seat" would imagine a significant person from his past. The participant would be asked to role-play with this perceived person speaking to him as if he were actually sitting in the empty chair. During this dialogue with either Perls or the imagined person, the participant was often asked to change roles and act as if he were the other person or perhaps Perls himself. In these workshops, participants might also be asked to become a part of their dream such as a chair, knife, or glass of water. Part of one such session with a patient named Max (not Reinhardt) is recorded as follows:

M: I've tried over the past 24 hours to try to identify myself and be one of these two men or the woman, and talk to myself. And I just couldn't do it. They refused to say a word. They were just looking at me, totally silent. I was getting mad at them, I was screaming, and they wouldn't respond. I tried to play them; I'd just be sitting there and watching me, with total silence, a total death.

F: So what does Fritz say to that?

M: Fritz, Fritz says . . . "All right, could you talk to death?" . . . (whispers, with feeling) God damn it.

F: Say this again

M: God damn it, I said./F: Again./

God damn it./F: Again./

God damn it! (strikes arm of chair with fist) . . .

F: What do you experience now? Something's going on.

M: I experience what I experienced the evening before the dream. I was going to have brain surgery. It was the first time that I was totally, completely afraid of death. I had a car accident and I was just a healthy man and I suddenly had to go into brain surgery. And I was frightened to death. (whispers) And that sensation came back now absolutely. It's the first time I became aware of it as something totally in the present. You know, it's just there on the next corner. And I was afraid. I've n--I was never afraid before. And that sensation came back to me right now . . . Of sheer fear, just--

F: Talk to death . . .

M: But they--they--they are death. I don't know what to say to them!

F: Talk to death. You said you're afraid of death. I don't know what death means to you.

M: What are you going to do to me? All right, suppose you take over. What'll you do to me?

(laughs gently) I'll empty your mind. You'll be like that child; you will be without mind . . .

You see he stopped me. He stopped me right there . . . I started thinging . . .

F: You're using your mind again?

M: Yes. I just slipped into it.

F: Could you play a person without a mind?

M: The child! (lively) He was totally joyous. He was joyous, he was running around playing, /F: Play it./ collecting flowers--

F: Play him. (laughter)

M: (excitedly) He was going around, he was just collecting flowers, he was having fun, he was running around the hills, he was laughing, smiling, doing all the things.

F: Play him.

M: I am a child.

F: Play him.

M: A man without a mind doesn't talk, so I can only do things. I can only do things . . . (softly) No, he was laughing. (laughter) He was laughing and smiling.

F: Play him. (laughter)

M: (excitedly) No room, not enough room. I have to run--I just have to run. To play him I have to run up the hill and collect flowers.

F: See the difference between this mindless child and the thinker?

M: Yeah. I'm not unaware of it. . . . It's very true in the dream, I screamed in my dream. I screamed at the child like that. I screamed "There's no time. There's no time. You must understand." And he goes around collecting flowers. (laughter and applause)

F: Get the message? (laughter) Well you see this is what I'm concerned with. I, this Fritz can't go home with you. You can't have me as a permanent therapist. But you can get your own personalized Fritz and take this along with you. And he knows much more than I do because he's your creation. I can only guess or theorize or interpret what you're experiencing. I can see the scratch, but I cannot feel the itch. I'm not in you and I'm not arrogant enough to be a psychoanalyst and say that I know what you experience, what you feel. But if you understand the idea of this purely personal Fritz, you can get yourself a chair, couch or whatever you have, and whenever you're in trouble go and talk to this imaginary Fritz.²⁸

²⁸Perls, Verbatim, pp. 118-20.

In examining the above passage, the similarity between Reinhardt and Perls becomes obvious. Perls pushes with such "prodders" as "again, again" and "play him, play him." With each repetition the intensity is increased. The dialogue swells to a crescendo which is culminated with a final punch after which the participants sigh, feeling the relief of successful completion.

Reinhardt's influence on Perls is apparent when we compare Reinhardt's directing philosophies and practices with Perls' therapeutic philosophies and practices. Because both Reinhardt and Perls believed man to be the center of importance, they focused their attention on the person or group with which they were working. This focus was illuminated in their intensity and drive for the completion of their man-centered projects. These influences that Reinhardt exerted on Perls culminated in Perls adapting the dramatic philosophy of Reinhardt and creating his own stage in a therapeutic environment.

Another communication influence on Perls is that of rhetorician I. A. Richards. Although there is little documentation for the link between Perls and Richards, we do know that Perls was interested in Richards' theories of semantics. Jerry Kogan writes in "The Genesis of Gestalt Therapy" that, "In analyzing Perls' work, similarities between semantic theory and Gestalt Therapy are striking."²⁹ In particular, he draws a parallel between Perls' division of thought and feeling in order

²⁹ Jerry Kogan, "The Genesis of Gestalt Therapy," in The Handbook of Gestalt Therapy, eds. Chris Hatcher and Phillip Himelstein (New York: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1976), p. 242.

to elicit more accurate meaning. In order to understand this link let us first look at a brief description of I. A. Richards theory of semantics and then second at some of Perls' philosophy concerning the word-object relation and its effect on behavior.

As are most semanticists, I. A. Richards is concerned with words, their meaning, and, most importantly, the understanding of words and their meaning. Richards' theories are based on the belief that language is a system of signs. For Richards, a sign is anything that stands for something else. Its meaning is inherent in an individual's perception of that sign. In his book The Meaning of Meaning³⁰ co-written with C. K. Ogden, this concept is more clearly explained through what the authors call their "Meaning Triangle." The three parts of the triangle include: the referent (the object itself), the symbol (the sign that stands for that object), and the thought or reference (the image that is brought to mind in a person by the referent or the symbol). The relation between the symbol and the thought as well as between the referent and the thought is direct. On the other hand, the relation between the symbol and the referent are indirect because the only thing that ties them together is the thought created by the person. To make this idea clearer, let us apply the triangle to an actual object--this thesis. The referent would be the bound pages themselves, the symbol thesis, and the thought or reference would be whatever is called to a

³⁰ I. A. Richards and C. K. Ogden, The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1923).

person's mind when confronted with either the referent or the symbol. Richards further believes that these three points of the Meaning Triangle can be used in different ways. If the purpose is to communicate a description or objective outline of the referent the language is called scientific. If the purpose is to communicate a feeling or more subjective perception the language is called emotive. And if the purpose of the language is somewhere in between it is called mixed.

The key to the relation between Richards and Perls is that both saw meaning as being within the person. As Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman put it, what is important is to get around "to the semantic problems of what is 'in here.'"³¹ For Perls, the development of meaning from within the person becomes extensively emotive language. This is because, according to Perls, there is a distinct difference between thought (as Richards terms it) and feeling. Unfortunately in Perls' perspective, these two are not often separated. As a result, your "feelings" toward a word may affect my "thought" toward that word. For example, if you feel that this particular thesis is totally invalid and worthless, I may, because of my close tie to this piece of work, introject that feeling and turn it into my "thought" of the referent thesis. In other words, every time I see the word thesis, I will have a feeling of invalidation and worthlessness. Obviously the relation I make is not necessarily correct because I have confused what you feel with what I think. Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman state it this way:

³¹Frederick Perls, Ralph F. Hefferline, and Paul Goodman, Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality (New York: Bantam Books, 1951), p. 124.

If you at present have little or no visual memory--the ability to see vividly "in your mind's eye"--this is probably because you have erected a wall of words and thoughts between yourself and your environment. Your world is not genuinely experienced, but is contacted only to the extent necessary to activate your previously acquired systems of abstractions. Intellect superseded alive participation.³²

It then becomes important for each individual to gain awareness within himself so that the meaning he gives to language becomes truly his and not that of someone else. The factor that Richards is hesitant to include in his writings is the distinction developed within the individual between the word and the feelings related to or imposed upon that word. Keeping this in mind, we can see how Richards' Meaning Triangle became a springboard for Perls' work.

Richard's effect on Perls represents the beginning for a richer semantic tie with Alfred Korzyloski. Gerlad Kogan notes the significant influence that general semanticist Alfred Korzibski had on Perls.³³ One of Korzibski's disciples, Harry Weinberg, writes that,

Quite often it is stated that much in general semantics is childishly simple and obvious and has been said before in many ways and in many places. It is interesting to know, in this connection, that Korzibski himself was found of repeating again and again, "This is baby stuff."³⁴

This "baby stuff," however, is the key to understanding. It is not until we discover the obvious that we reach a level of understanding and as Weinberg point out, "Although 'obvious' points may be simply stated,

³²Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 91.

³³Kogan, G., p. 52.

³⁴Harry L. Weinberg, Level of Knowing and Existence: Studies in General Semantics (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 9.

their meaning on many levels are not as easily comprehended."³⁵ This statement is echoed by Perls as he says, "... we don't have to do anything else except get to the obvious . . ."³⁶

The Korzibskian influence on Perls is obvious in the global perspective just cited. This global perspective begins to narrow when methodology is discussed. For Korzybski, "General semantics is a rational methodology to be used by the individual himself . . ."³⁷ The ideas of Korzybski stressing internalization of the concepts are emphasized and amplified in Perls' therapy. Perls wants his clients to be able to "help themselves." As seen in the dream seminar dialogue presented earlier, Perls asked the participant, Max, to "be Fritz." The purpose was for Max to be able to take "Fritz" home with him so that he could continue improving himself on his own.

Another possible concept Perls derived from Korzybski seems to be a caution against magical results. Explaining Korzybski's thinking, Weinberg interpolates, "It is the height of foolishness to expect to change easily and quickly after having practiced patterns of misevaluation all our lives."³⁸ Perls expresses a similar philosophy in a more colorful manner, "We do not talk of instant joy, instant sensory awareness, instant cure. The growth process is a process that takes time. We can't just snap our fingers and say, 'Come on, let's be gay . . .'"³⁹

³⁵Weinberg, p. 7.

³⁶Perls, Verbatim, p. 57.

³⁷Weinberg, p. 10.

³⁸Weinberg, p. 30.

³⁹Perls, Verbatim, p. 2.

The influence Korzybski exerted on Perls is most vividly expressed in teaching others to understand the obvious and work through the growth process. Korzybski developed two key precepts which form the basis for his theory and were later integrated into Gestalt Therapy by Perls. The first of these is "the word is not the thing" and the second is "the map is not the territory."⁴⁰ Both of these precepts are concerned with the distinction between factual knowledge and inferential knowledge. Weinberg defines these two terms as follows:

A factual statement . . . is one which is made only after observation and which is verifiable by accepted standards. In other words, it is a verifiable descriptive statement An inferential statement is not limited by observation; it is a statement about that which has not been observed. It may be a guess which takes off from the point where observation ceases or it may be a wild⁴¹ and wooly fabrication in no way related to the observation.

Korzybski and his disciples point out that there is nothing wrong with making inferences; we have to many times. But we must realize that an inference is an inference. "The misevaluation arises when we act as if our inferential knowledge were factual knowledge. Make inferences but know that they are inferences."⁴²

This general philosophy is the base for both "the word is not the thing" and "the map if not the territory." "The word is not the thing" deals with the idea that we often confuse our verbal symbols with reality. The word is not recognized as an abstraction of the thing

⁴⁰ Alfred Korzybski, Science and Santiy: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics (Lakeville, Conn.: International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Co., 1948).

⁴¹Weinberg, pp. 15-16.

⁴²Weinberg, p. 20.

resulting in distorted meaning. S. I. Hayakawa, another disciple of Korzybski, cites the following example:

In one way or another, we are all like the brilliant student who cheats in his exams in order to make Phi Beta Kappa: It is so much more⁴³ important to have the symbol than the things it stands for.

What Korzybski advocates is that we get to our senses. All of our verbalizations tend to confuse us; to distort or abstract the real meaning. Noting that many experiments place emphasis on experiencing nonverbally rather than verbally, Weinberg interprets Korzybski in the following passage:

It is useless to think about performing these experiments, talk about their usefulness or absurdity, or theorize about their significance. All of this is verbalization and can tell you nothing about what you will experience if you actually perform them. If you do work at them faithfully, a few minutes or more a day, you will begin to discover a worlds you never knew existed--or at best only hazily. Literally, a new world is discovered, a new set of semantic reactions becomes possible. There is nothing magical about this, though sometimes the results seem to be; it's not hypnosis or hallucination or anything abnormal. Rather, it is the discovery of powers of abstraction only dimly experienced previously because they had been buried under a smothering blanket of words This is the level of abstraction on which we live our most important level of experience, for it is the level of feeling and sensation and emotion.⁴⁴

Perls recognized the importance of differentiating between the symbol and what it stands for. In working with clients, Perls often reminded them that, "You mix up what you want to be with what is."⁴⁵ Similarly, he advocates:

⁴³ S. I. Hayakawa, Language in Thought and Action (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1939), p. 30.

⁴⁴ Weinberg, p. 58.

⁴⁵ Perls, Verbatim, p. 190.

Lose your mind and come to your senses. Every little bit is a piece of the jigsaw puzzle, which together will make a much larger whole--⁴⁶a much stronger, happier, more completely real personality.

Whereas Korzybski might ask the person to experience the object, Perls would ask you to "play" that object. Transcripts of Perls' dream therapy workshops are filled with phrases where he tells participants to "Be your voice," "Be the policeman," or "Be the snake." All of these things appeared in dreams of the participants. Perls' objective was to help the participant match up the symbol with its appropriate meaning-- "the word is not the thing."

The second precept, "the map is not the territory," is an extension of "the word is not the thing." For every person we meet, we develop a set of symbols or a set of categories that, for us, stands for that person. These symbols or categories become our "map" of that particular person. The problem with these maps is that they act as blinders to seeing the total, "real," person. We must be open to see that person ". . . in the context of his life experience and his psychophysiological state at the moment."⁴⁷ Weinberg points out that:

When our maps do not fit the territory, when we act as if our inferences are factual knowledge, we prepare ourselves for a world that isn't there. If this happens often enough, the inevitable result is frustration and an ever-increasing tendency to wrap the territory to fit our maps. We see what we want to see, and the more we see it, the more likely we are to reinforce this distorted perception, in the familiar circular and spiral feedback pattern.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Perls, Verbatim, p. 74.

⁴⁷Weinberg, p. 6.

⁴⁸Weinberg, p. 29.

This philosophy evolves in Perls' work in relation to self verses society. If you attempt to live by the map that either yourself or society has drawn for you, society begins to expect this behavior from you, you become predictable, and "you" die. Perls writes that:

Once you have character, you have developed a rigid system. Your behavior becomes petrified, predictable, and you lose your ability to cope freely with the world with all your resources. You are predetermined just to cope with events in one way, namely, as your character prescribes it to be. So it seems a paradox when I say that the richest person, the most productive, creative person, is a person who has no character. In our society, we demand a person to have character, and especially a good character, because then you are predictable, and you can be pigeonholed, and so on.⁴⁹

The link between Korzybski and Perls becomes obvious when one realized that for both Korzybski and Perls, "the word is not the thing" and "the map is not the territory." Once the individual becomes aware of this and stops making inferences into facts, he is on the path to a more accurate and clearer understanding of himself and others. This in turn leads to accurate and clearer communication. It appears that the two principle precepts of general semantics were influential to the point that Frederick Perls incorporated them into his theory of Gestalt Therapy.

Therapeutic Philosophies in Gestalt Therapy

The first portion of this chapter has introduced the reader to Frederick Perls the man and the communicative influences effecting him. We have seen that, despite the numerous adverse situations appearing

⁴⁹Perls, Verbatim, p. 7.

throughout his life, Perls achieved an intense sensitivity toward his world and especially toward the people in his world. The diverse influences on Perls have also been noted paying special attention to those who, because of their background in communication processes, have effected Perls' therapeutic philosophies in Gestalt Therapy. This exploration led us to understand how Perls' concepts became so highly communicative in nature. The remainder of this chapter will examine two of these concepts more extensively. The two concepts were chosen because they deal most specifically with processes of the self, a major concern in interpersonal communication. These concepts are: perceptual restructuring and self-torture games. The perceptual restructuring devices that will be discussed are retroflexion, introjection, and projection. All three devices are means by which the individual distorts or restructures his view of himself. For Perls, the primary purpose for understanding these devices is that the individual will become aware of them and thus be able to use them to his advantage. As a means of discussing self-torture games we will present an explanation of Perls' concept of topdog/underdog. Simply stated, each individual has two opposing "characters" within him--topdog and underdog. Their dialogues are a means by which the individual talks to himself. As with the perceptual restructuring devices, Perls believes that awareness of this concept will enable the individual to use it in increasing self-actualization.

The first of Perls' theories dealing with perceptual restructuring devices that will be discussed is retroflexion. According to Perls,

Hefferline, and Goodman, "To retroflect means literally 'to turn sharply back against.' When a person retroflects behavior, he does to himself what he did or tried to do to other persons or objects."⁵⁰ Instead of directing his energies to changing the environment so that it suits his needs, the person substitutes himself for the environment. The individual either does to himself what he wishes to do to someone else or would like someone else to do to him. Erving and Miriam Polster in their book Gestalt Therapy Integrated note that both of these reactions, "deal with the problem of man running away from a spectral observer who turns out to be himself and from whom, of course, he can never escape."⁵¹ For this reason, it is important to gain awareness of the retroflection process and learn to deal with it.

The first type of retroflection, the individual doing to himself what he wishes to do to someone else, is more explicitly explained by Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman who recognize that the individual:

redirects activity inward and substitutes himself in place of the environment as the target of behavior. To the extent he does this, he splits his personality into "doer" and "done to."⁵²

Perls recognizes two parts of this type of retroflection. First, upon retroflecting the person does an injustice to himself in that he turns the emotion that should be expelled upon his environment inward and

⁵⁰Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 171.

⁵¹Erving Polster and Miriam Polster, Gestalt Therapy Integrated: Contours of Theory and Practice (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 83.

⁵²Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 171.

inflicts this emotion onto himself instead of using it constructively to get what he wants from the environment. An example of this means of retroflecting is the man being fired by his boss. Upon hearing the news, the man continually beats his fist into his other hand. Instead of "beating up" his boss, the man takes his anger out on himself through "beating up" himself. Retroflection is not necessarily physical. The man may begin verbally abusing himself for something totally unrelated to the "firing" situation instead of "telling off" his now ex-boss.

The second part of this type of retroflection deals with a split in the individual's personality. Half of the individual strives to attain satisfaction while the other half fights to hold him back. Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman note that, "What started as conflict between organism and environment has come to be an 'inner conflict' between one part of the personality and another part--between one kind of behavior and its opposite."⁵³

The other type of retroflection as defined in Gestalt Therapy has to do with an individual doing to himself what he wishes someone else to do to him. Specifically, the person gives to himself what he wanted but did not get from others.

This may be attention, love, pity, punishment, almost anything! A great deal of what originally was done for one by others--notably by his parents--he takes over and does for himself as he grows up. This, of course, is healthy, provided it does not include trying to gratify for oneself what are genuinely interpersonal needs.⁵⁴

⁵³Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 172.

⁵⁴Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 176.

In describing this type of retroflection, Perls and his colleagues offer the example of a lonely college student. Unable to make friends, the student would sit in his dormitory room listening to other students being called to come join their friends. One night he was found outside calling his own name. This type of retroflection is in the following explanation by Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman:

The environment--mostly other persons--proved hostile to his efforts to satisfy his needs. They frustrated and punished him. In such an unequal context--he was a child--he was sure to lose. Consequently, to avoid the pain and danger entailed in renewed attempts, he gave up. The environment, being stronger,⁵⁵ won out and enforced its wishes at the expense of his.

The same type of retroflection occurs in people who curl up and hold themselves at night because there is no one to hold them or who ask themselves questions because there is no one else to ask the question to. In his book, Ego, Hunger and Aggression Perls notes that:

Whenever a verb is used in connection with a reflexive pronoun, we may look for a retroflection; if a person talks to "himself," he does so instead of talking to someone else.⁵⁶

Just because a man retroflects by beating his hands or a person retroflects by hugging himself or even talking to himself does not necessarily mean that the retroflection is bad. For example, it would be much better to hit your own fist than to hit your boss and possibly be arrested for assault. On a more simplistic level, it would not be

⁵⁵ Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 171.

⁵⁶ Frederick S. Perls, Ego, Hunger and Aggression: The Beginnings of Gestalt Therapy (1947; rpt. New York: Random House, 1969), p. 120.

wise to succumb to the urge to inhale while swimming underwater. In both of these cases, a complete release of inhibitions (not retroflecting) could possibly have serious repercussions. Retroflections, then, can be healthy and even necessary. Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman write that, "The important question is whether or not the person has rational grounds for presently choking off behavior in given circumstances."⁵⁷ Advice on how to distinguish a "good" retroflection from a "bad" retroflection is offered by these authors:

When retroflection is under aware control--that is, when a person in a current situation suppresses particular responses which, if expressed, would be to his advantage--no one can contest the soundness of such behavior. It is only when the retroflection is habitual, chronic, out of control, that it is pathological; for then it is not something done temporarily, perhaps as an emergency measure or to await a more suitable occasion, but is a deadlock perpetuated in the personality.⁵⁸

The "deadlock" that Perls and his colleagues refer to is what is called an "inner-conflict" earlier in this section. Both sides of the personality, both forces, remain opposed yet stagnant. The person therefore cannot function properly. As Erving and Miriam Polster recognize, "he blocks his outlets to the world"⁵⁹

As a means for loosening the clinch between the two sides of the personality caused by retroflection, the Polsters offer a first step:

⁵⁷ Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 172.

⁵⁸ Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 172.

⁵⁹ Polster and Polster, p. 84.

. . . since the impulse to do or be done to is severely overshadowed, the interaction ⁶⁰within the divided self must be reenergized with awareness.

They continue by saying that, "What is needed to undo retroflection is to return to the self-consciousness that accompanied its inception."⁶¹

Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman say that the person must next

discover and accept the fact that he does "take it out on himself." He can become aware of the emotions of the retroflecting part of his personality--notably, the grim joy taken in administering punishment to himself . . . Only when accepted . . . does one reach the possibility of modifying, differentiating, redirecting it into healthy expressions.

The manifestation of this solution can be seen in referring back to the man who beat his hands because he was angry with his boss for firing him. Assuming that the retroflective act was not done with awareness (the man was not aware of the correlation between wanting to beat up his boss and beating himself), the first step is for the man to become aware of the connection. Once he realizes that he is taking out the anger for his boss on himself, he can then begin to use this anger constructively. For instance, instead of punishing himself, the man could chop wood, thus making his anger, his retroflection, work for him rather than against him.

Typically the person who retroflects takes the attitude, "It doesn't hurt anyone else if I'm mean to myself so why worry?" It wouldn't hurt anyone else if the person lived an isolated life in which he had no contact with anyone else, but none of us live an isolated life

⁶⁰Polster and Polster, p. 86.

⁶¹Polster and Polster, p. 88.

apart from society. The fact is a person's retroflection can directly affect the people he comes in contact with. Much of a person's retroflective behavior escapes true retroflection. Instead of emotions meant for his environment being turned inward, they are often randomly thrown outward. These emotions become directed at others who had nothing to do with the formation of the emotions. The anger of the man who was fired from his job would escape being turned inward and would be partially turned outward instead. Chances are that if a person nags at himself, he nags at others or if he feels angry at himself (introjected anger that initially was directed at the man's boss), he feels angry at everyone around him. As both Perls and his colleagues and the Polsters point out, before reversing retroflections, the person must be aware of these behaviors in himself. When the person is able to do this, he will then:

. . . let up on himself and then start evaluating the persons in his environment. Once he ventures to do this, he will soon come to regard such verbal evaluations, whether applied to others or himself, as of secondary importance. He will realize that his retroflected evaluations were merely a mechanism for dwelling on himself. When he directs the same kind of elaborate evaluation to others, he may soon see the futility of it and stop. Then he will notice persons with simple awareness of what they are and what they do, and will learn either how to manipulate them in a genuinely satisfying way or to adjust himself to them.⁶²

The second device for perceptual restructuring is seen in what Perls calls the introjection. In Ego, Hunger and Aggression he says that ". . . introjection means preserving the structure of things taken

⁶²Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 184.

in, whilst the organism requires their destruction."⁶³ A more explicit definition of introjection is offered by Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman:

An introject . . . consist of material--a way of acting, feeling, evaluating--which you have taken into your system of behavior, but which you have not assimilated in such fashion as to make it a genuine part of your organism.⁶⁴

Living within society requires every individual to function within society. In order to function, the individual both gives and takes from his environment. Consequently, the individual may accept or reject what his environment offers. These offerings include beliefs, feelings, values, actions and so on. In order for the individual to achieve successful self growth he must decide which of these beliefs or actions to accept or reject. Truly accepting these offerings means that the individual assimilates them thoroughly and thus makes them part of himself. On the other hand, if the individual blindly accepts these beliefs or actions, they become an introject. The offerings in this case become parasites within the individual which are still part of the environment rather than part of the individual. As an amplification of this point, Perls states that:

My contention is that every introject, be it partial or total, is a foreign body within the organism.⁶⁵

Children receive many introjects from their parents. Little boys are often told that "crying is bad" and similarly, little girls are told

⁶³Perls, Ego, p. 129.

⁶⁴Perls, Hefferline and Goodman, p. 222.

⁶⁵Frederick S. Perls, "Theory and Technique of Personality Integration," American Journal of Psychotherapy, 2, No. 4 (1948), 582.

that "sex before marriage" is bad. These value statements are introjects. They are "blindly accepted" by the child. As the child grows older, however, he or she will begin to question these value statements. Perls parallels the process of dealing with introjections to the process of digestion saying that, "Physical food, properly digested and assimilated, becomes part of the organism; but food which 'rests heavy on the stomach' is an introject."⁶⁶ Whatever is not totally the individual's but has been injected into him (much like a vaccination) is an introject.

After gaining an understanding of what an introject is, the individual must learn to successfully either assimilate or reject the introject. Dealing with these introjects can be compared with proper eating and digesting. One would not swallow a thick, juicy steak whole. One would instead cut each bit, carefully rejecting those portions which appeared full of grissel and fat. The individual would then chew the "good" bites thoroughly in order to gain full appreciation of every succulent morsal. Dispelling introjections from our system is, for most people, as painful and unpleasant as vomiting. The process must, however, take place. In The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy Perls states that:

For as long as the patient is an accumulation of introjects, he is not he and he cannot support himself. For as long as he persists in the pattern of introjecting, support will be lacking. If introjection is his primary technique for meeting the world, even if we are successful in exorcising

⁶⁶Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 222.

one or two introjects--pappa and ⁶⁷mamma, for instance, he will still go on accumulating others.

As stated by Perls in Ego, Hunger and Aggression and reiterated in Gestalt Therapy, the Ego or "I" accumulates a series of introjects and therefore does not function spontaneously. Perls recognizes that this, "is in every case contrary to the requirements of the personality."⁶⁸ As a result of these introjects not being properly assimilated, the individual acts and even becomes the role that others have chosen for him rather than exerting his own individuality. The young man going to college majors in business and eventually takes a "junior executive" position. He becomes the model of conservatism because that lifestyle corresponds with the values and actions taught to him by his parents. Given a choice, the young man might prefer to be an elementary school teacher or an actor. The introjects swallowed by him at an earlier age have resulted in the man developing an entire lifestyle that is quite probably in contradiction to his desires for self. Perls recognizes:

So we must concentrate on getting him to see how he swallows whole, how he constantly ⁶⁹interrupts the process of deconstructing and assimilating.

Therefore, it is important to vomit those introjects that make you feel nauseous--those parts of others that do not belong in the pers.

Just as with the physical process of regurgitation, the first step in getting rid of introjects is to become aware that the stomach, or in

⁶⁷ Fritz Perls, The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy (New York: Bantam Books, 1973), p. 58.

⁶⁸ Perls, Ego, p. 129.

⁶⁹ Perls, The Gestalt Approach, p. 58.

this case the personality, is upset. Once the individual becomes aware of the discomfort, he begins to distinguish what is causing the discomfort--he makes a distinction between the nutritious substance and the junk food. In order to understand how the process of introject elimination is achieved, first read the following statement by Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman.

Disgust is the desire to bring up, to vomit forth, to reject material which is disagreeable to the organism. One "gets the stuff down" only by numbing and putting out of commission the healthy organism's natural means of discriminating, smelling, tasting, and so on. In such an event it is crucial at least that one feel the disgust later on, and thus be enabled to "get the stuff back up." Since introjects have been gulped down precisely in this manner, their elimination from your system requires that you remobilize disgust.⁷⁰

According to these authors, once a person is able to revive his disgust, the natural urge will be to vomit it back up. He has then achieved two things. First, you have eliminated foreign matter from your system which, just as with vomiting, results in relief from discomfort. Second, by distinguishing which parts of your Ego or "I" were really you and which parts were introjects, you have succeeded in accepting your own nature. By freeing yourself of introjects, you are then able to make free choices as to what you do, feel, or believe on your own.

As was noted in the discussion on retroflection, achieving freedom from introjects is not a magical process. The process takes time. Instead of blindly accepting the values imposed on him as a child, the individual breaks up the information separating that information which

⁷⁰Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 81.

applies to him from that which does not. He then carefully weighs the information (values, beliefs) which appear, accepts those which meets his needs, and rejects those which do not. In this way, the information can be easily and properly assimilated into the individual's personality.

The third device for perceptual restructuring is projection. According to Perls, Hefferline and Goodman:

A projection is a trait, attitude, feeling, or bit of behavior which actually belongs to your own personality but is not experienced as such; instead, it is attributed to objects or persons in the environment and then experienced as directed ⁷¹ toward you by them instead of the other way around.

In his article "The Development of Gestalt Therapy," James Simpson, disciple of Perls, notes that:

We project onto another person those attributes or traits that we find unacceptable in ourselves. Then we point our finger at him and castigate him for being whatever it is we do not like in ourselves. This act permits us to maintain a fantasy or fiction of how we imagine we are rather than realizing and accepting how we are. ⁷²

As the authors of Gestalt Therapy point out, a person may feel that they are being rejected when in actuality he is the one doing the rejecting. Once he has projected his rejecting, he then becomes the passive "victim." The difficulty for him arises in his inability to distinguish fiction or fantasy from reality. He finds "proof" that what he observes is reality. Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman explain:

⁷¹ Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 248.

⁷² James S. Simpkin, "The Development of Gestalt Therapy," in The Handbook of Gestalt Therapy, eds. Chris Hatcher and Phillip Himelstein (New York: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1976), p. 230.

A person's unfelt need to reject Person X will lead to finding something in his own behavior which he thinks accounts for but does not justify X in rejecting him. If X were operating on the basis which the projector supposes and would actually reject him, then the projector's purpose would be accomplished--namely, it would bring about their separation, which is precisely what the projector wants without being aware of it.⁷³

The person who projects his feelings rather than expressing them, is essentially unable to deal with his own self. In therapy, the person learns to reown his projections. Feelings that the person unknowingly projects onto others are put into proper perspective. Erving and Miriam Polster offer the following example:

A graduate student, David, treated cruelly by one of his professors, was both outraged and depleted by the confrontations with this man. In exploring how David would be as a cruel man he discovered that he himself had tried to dominate his professor at first. Furthermore, it was a general need of his to dominate a situation so as to retain control of his own independence. Now he was reaping the whirlwind, but knowing he had been the blower as well as the blown made David feel less victimized.⁷⁴

By changing roles--making the professor's supposed attitudes his own--David became able to cope.

The attribute connected with projection is that it allows us to acknowledge what the Polsters call "human mutuality." As they recognize, "How else would people know what others are talking about? A basic fact of life is that 'it takes one to know one.'"⁷⁵ In other

⁷³Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 251.

⁷⁴Polster and Polster, p. 80.

⁷⁵Polster and Polster, p. 81.

words, "the ability to project is a natural human reaction."⁷⁶ On the other hand, the detriment connected with projection is that the person becomes alienated from his impulses. As Perls, Hefferline and Goodman note, he does not experience feelings and acts as "himself-in-action." According to these authors:

. . . he can disclaim responsibility for it [his feeling or action], try to forget or hid⁷⁷ it, or project it and suffer it as coming from the outsider.

Once he has disclaimed responsibility, the projector loses his sense of self-awareness and ultimately his identity.

The frightening aspect of projecting comes not only in the fact that man is alienated from himself, but also in the frequency of his projections. In Gestalt Therapy Verbatim, Perls recognizes that, ". . . it's just unbelievable how much we project, and how blind and deaf we are to what is really going on."⁷⁸ Similarly, Perls' student Jim Simpkin writes that, "My own clinical experience leads me to conjecture that projection is now by far the most commonly encountered defense."⁷⁹

Keeping in mind the detriments of projection outlined above, it becomes important to learn how to handle them. Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman contend that this is done by first learning to assimilate these projections. Perls and his colleagues roughly outline two steps for the

⁷⁶Polster and Polster, p. 81.

⁷⁷Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 253.

⁷⁸Perls, Verbatim, p. 72.

⁷⁹Simpkin, p. 230.

assimilation process: (1) change the projection to a retroflection, and then (2) reverse in both directions what you demand of yourself and what others demand of you.

The first step of changing the projection to a retroflection is a matter of translating from "My conscious demands . . ." to "I demand from myself . . ."⁸⁰ Instead of saying, "My conscious demands that I not make a rude remark to the lady who knocked my papers all over the floor," the person would say, "I demand of myself not to make a rude remark to the lady who knocked my papers all over the floor." This process is a way of dissolving your conscious. Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman advocate this process in saying that:

Do not be afraid that by dissolving conscious you will become a criminal or an impulsive psychopath. You will be surprised, when you allow organic self-regulation to develop and your outgoing drives to contact other persons, how the principles that you ought to live by will seem to emerge from your very bones and will be obviously appropriate⁸¹ for living out regardless of the social situation you are in.

The second step in the assimilation process is that of the person reversing his demands. He would explore both sides of the demand: "Society says I can't yell at that woman" and "I say that I can't yell at that woman." As the authors mentioned above note:

You must differentiate the actual compulsion of society from both your private demands and your introjections. In your conscious are you nagging, threatening, blackmailing, casting sad reproachful glances? If you concentrate on these fantasies you will find how much of your moral duty is your

⁸⁰Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 258.

⁸¹Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 259.

own masked attack, how much consists of particular introjected influences, and how much is rational.⁸²

Once a person has learned to assimilate his projection by dissolving the conscious, he is made aware that he has an "unwanted feeling" which he has been projecting onto others. In order to get rid of this "unwanted feeling," the person must, ". . . accept it, express it, and thus discharge it."⁸³ By continually projecting his traits, attitudes, feelings or behaviors onto others, he creates a false reality. What he sees as the real world is real only to him because this world has become a screen for his projections. Since the person who continually projects is attempting to make the projections conform with observations, he will, ". . . always be seeking proofs, making mountains out of molehills, or otherwise distorting [his] perspective."⁸⁴ Perls and his associates propose that you "be on the watch" for projected behavior. Their suggestion is that you:

Think yourself into the shoes of the aggressor, admirer, rejector, foolhardy one. More often than not, the reversal will click.⁸⁵

By putting himself in the other person's place--in the other person's shoes--the individual is made aware that what he thought to be others rejecting him is actually him rejecting others. Once he is able to reown his own projections, he will stop seeking proofs for his position

⁸²Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, pp. 258-9.

⁸³Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 260.

⁸⁴Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 261.

⁸⁵Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman, p. 261.

and begin to wipe away his distorted picture of reality. Only by accepting feelings as his own and expressing them can the individual discharge those feelings he doesn't want and recapture his own identity. In the words of Frederick Perls:

And Projector? You have been
Most despis'd and put on shelf.
You are more than just a screen,
Come, emerge, potential self!⁸⁶

Self-Torture Games

The process of self-talk which has become popularized in recent years is demonstrated vividly in what Perls calls self-torture games. One of the best examples of this type of game which the individual plays is that of topdog/underdog. Freud's concept dealing with this type of intrapersonal construct was the forerunner of Perls' concept. Freud labeled three levels of the conscious which interacted on various levels. These three intities are the id, ego and superego. The id is principally a reservoir of instinctive urges which demand immediate gratification. It deals with the person's innate desires. If the person contained the id alone, he would be free, as far as the conscious is concerned, to do as he wished. The problem contained within the id is that it has no skills for adapting the individual to conditions in his environment. For this reason we have an ego. The function of the go is to perceive conditions within the environment accurately and to plan action in such a way as to achieve as much gratification as is realistically possible. Contained within the individual's ego is a

⁸⁶Perls, In and Out, p. 211.

system of attitudes toward himself. These attitudes are learned and are generally referred to as the person's moral code. These attitudes become internalized within what Freud calls the superego. The superego is the portion of the individual which evokes guilt. For example, a child has internalized the attitude that drinking alcoholic beverages is "bad." If this prohibition inherent within the superego is violated, the person feels guilty. The superego may even go so far as to prohibit thinking about the idea of drinking so that the mere awareness of an urge to drink on the part of the individual produces guilt. At this point, according to Freud, the id and the superego are in direct opposition.

Perls' allegation is however contrary to that of Freud. He credits Freud for doing "half the job." According to Perls,

if there is a superego, there must also be an ingraego. Again, Freud did half the job. He saw the topdog, the superego, but he left out the underdog which is just as much a personality as the topdog.⁸⁷

Topdog may roughly be equated with what Freud calls the superego. In describing this character, Perls says:

The topdog usually is righteous and authoritarian; he knows best. He is sometimes right, but always righteous. The topdog is a bully, and works with "You should" and "you should not." The topdog manipulates with demands and threats of catastrophe, such as, "If you don't, then--you won't be loved, you won't go to heaven, you will die," and so on.⁸⁸

⁸⁷Perls, Verbatim, p. 18.

⁸⁸Perls, Verbatim, p. 19.

As with Freud's superego, topdog knows best. He has inherent within him all of those internalized attitudes. The primary difference between the superego and topdog is that topdog is uncontrollably articulate. Topdog always assumes that he is right--his way is the way. This attitude accounts for his righteousness. He means of gaining control or getting his way is what might be called primitive. Topdog does not care what others seem to think about his opinion. He readily speaks his mind whenever he chooses. Rather than playing sophisticated manipulation games, topdog emphatically speaks his mind. Without thinking twice, he will tell the individual "You shouldn't do that." His means for manipulation is the simple fear approach. Threats are topdog's favorite means for getting the individual to do things "his way." Topdog would say, "If you drink that scotch you will become an alcoholic." The end result of topdog's techniques is the same as the result of superego's--both entities work to get their way by eliciting guilt.

The underdog, on the other hand, manipulates by pretending to have no power. Perls describes underdog as follows: "The underdog manipulates with being defensive, apologetic, wheedling, playing the cry-baby, and such."⁸⁹ Underdog plays the weakling. Because he believes that he has no power, underdog likes to project blame on anything or anyone except himself. He either pretends that he didn't know any better so it wasn't his fault or that he will eventually get around to doing whatever it is that needs to get done. Common phrases uttered by underdog are:

⁸⁹Perls, Verbatim, p. 19.

"But I didn't know," "Tomorrow," "I can't help it I fail," "I meant well," "It's not my fault." Underdog is just as articulate as topdog. However Perls notes that underdog often wins in competition because his cunning nature is not as primitive as that of topdog's.

Inherent within Perls' concept of topdog/underdog is the fact that both entities have their own personalities which tend to directly oppose each other. This opposition is seen largely through watching topdog and underdog try to manipulate one another. Both of these characters are extremely articulate about their positions on any given subject that the individual in which they are contained may be dealing with at the time. Their conversations are the person talking to himself--self-talk. Because topdog and underdog are on opposing sides, conflict is inevitable. This conflict is the basis for the person's own self torture. In a series of four lectures reprinted in Gestalt Therapy Now, Perls explains the conflict this way:

One part of you talks to the other part and says, "You should be better, you should not be this way, you should not do that, you shouldn't be what you are, you should be what you are not."⁹⁰

This conflict which is caused by topdog and underdog arguing inside the individual causes the individual to feel divided--not "together." Because the topdog and underdog are constantly fighting for control, "The person is fragmented into controller and controlled. This inner

⁹⁰Frederick S. Perls, "Four Lectures," in Gestalt Therapy Now: Theory, Techniques, Applications, eds. Joen Fagan and Irma Lee Shepard (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 15.

conflict, the struggle between the topdog and the underdog, is never complete, because topdog as well as underdog fight for their lives."⁹¹

In therapy, Perls' way of helping clients to reach self-actualization was through having them articulate a conversation between topdog and underdog. As an example of the way topdog and underdog conduct themselves, read the following conversation articulated by Perls' topdog and underdog as he writes his autobiography:

Topdog: Fritz you can't do this. One more unfinished manuscript! Readers or not, publisher or not, you had excitements, new insights and discoveries. What if others profit by it?

Underdog: This is not the point. I am getting obsessed with words and I am becoming selective. What I see, think, and remember is being put into words viewed from a writer's point of view. This morning I felt close to insanity. Words were crawling all over me like termites.

Topdog: All the more I suggest you go on. You had times where words, feelings and thoughts came together in poetry. If you are stuck between the verbal and the non-verbal, then look at your impasse, use your theory.

Underdog: Disciplining and forcing myself is not my preaching.

Topdog: Who speaks of preaching? You yourself said over and over that any mental illness is the result of phobic behavior. You declare over and over that Freud could not finish his work, in spite of all his discoveries, because he had severe phobias. Now you are becoming phobic yourself. Now you are avoiding the pain of drudgery or a possible slight to your vanity.

Underdog: You are right and you are wrong. Sure I am phobic when it comes to insanity. I don't want to go crazy.

Topdog: Stop that nonsense immediately! You know that you are a near borderline case. You know that you had the courage to go a few times closer to the border of insanity. You know that your dreams are schizy. You want to explore schizophrenia. You know how with all your pathology you managed to develop into a being of which many, many are jealous. And most of all your role on earth is not finished! You are beginning to assume a place in history, at least in psychology, perhaps in philosophy.

⁹¹Perls, Verbatim, p. 72.

Underdog: Blah, blah, blah, blaaaaah.

Topdog: Now Fritz, don't make me angry. And don't play the spiteful brat.

Underdog: Ha, ha, ha, ha! I got you. I can play teacher, I can play sexpot, but I must not play spiteful brat.

Topdog: Well, you are too sharp for me. So do what you want to do!⁹²

Perls concludes this exercise in self talk by commenting that he feels much relieved and can now continue writing his manuscript. This dialogue is a typical example of how topdog and underdog wrangle back and forth for control. Once the individual learns to recognize the split that goes on inside of him he can begin to reconcile the conflict.

John Stevens whose book Awareness is based on the Gestalt Therapy of Perls recognizes the importance of the individual learning to deal with topdog and underdog. He says that when all of the individual's energy is divided between topdog and underdog he is left with no energy to deal with the struggles in the real world. If he tries to deal with outside conflicts before dealing with those that are inside, he only creates more conflict both inside and outside.⁹³ Stevens continues by saying that:

As long as I believe that my conflict is only with someone or something outside myself, I can do very little except complain about it, or try to change or destroy it. When I realize that much of the conflict is within me, then I can do something much more productive. I can take responsibility for my own difficulties,⁹⁴ and stop blaming the world for problems that are my own.

⁹²Perls, In and Out, pp. 157-59.

⁹³John O. Stevens, Awareness: Exploring, Experimenting, Experiencing (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 72.

⁹⁴Stevens, pp. 72-3.

The key phrase of Stevens' statement is that "the conflict is within me." Thus the simplicity of understanding topdog and underdog is that the individual deals with them every day of his life. The individual is aware that he sometimes feels guilty and that he sometimes places the blame for an action or feeling onto something or someone else. These two processes are the results of topdog's and underdog's manipulation. Topdog makes the person feel guilty by using such phrases as "You shouldn't do that." "You should be eating that stalk of celery instead of that piece of pizza, you fat slob." At the same time underdog is working his form of manipulation by casting the blame elsewhere. Underdog would say something like "I'll start my diet tomorrow." "One little piece of pizza won't ruin my diet." "I can't help myself. I only had an apple for lunch." Most people are familiar with this type of inner turmoil; although the individual can make himself feel guilty for just about anything, he can also figure out a way to justify it. This is the doing of the two parts of his personality that Perls calls topdog and underdog.

The preceding section concerning Perls' therapeutic philosophies has expounded on his theories concerning perceptual restructuring and self-torture games. Perceptual restructuring devices include retroflection, introjection, and projection. In retroflection the individual substitutes himself for his environment; he does to himself what he wishes to do to someone else. Introflection deals with the idea that individuals take in certain ideas, attitudes, or feelings which they never assimilate or truly make their own. For proper self growth, the

individual must assimilate the introjected material. Projection is the process by which the individual convinces himself that a characteristic or feeling inherent within his own personality is, instead, a characteristic of someone else. The person who projects characteristics or feelings instead of expressing them is essentially unable to deal with his own self. All three of these devices offer explicit descriptions of how the individual can thwart his own self growth or the achievement of "self-ness." In addition, to fostering an understanding of what the individual does to himself to hinder his own development, Perls outlines means by which the individual can intercept his own self destruction and turn those behaviors into productive means for self growth.

The example of self-torture games cited in Chapter III is that of topdog/underdog. Topdog and underdog are separate personalities which are inherent within each individual. Closely related to Freud's superego and id, these two entities are highly articulate and opinionated. This becomes apparent in their constant struggle for power. The individual can either let the conflict between topdog and underdog pull him apart (divide his own personality) or he can control both entities thus utilizing topdog and underdog for the enhancement of self. As with perceptual restructuring devices, Perls offers good explanations of how the process within the self works as well as how these processes can be used to the individual's advantage.

CHAPTER III

SURVEY OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL IN
INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONPurpose

The purpose of this section is to examine representative instructional material or textbooks being written on interpersonal communication for the field of speech. It is necessary to emphasize the limitation because a sizeable number of these texts were written for the fields of psychology and social psychology and authors from disciplines other than speech do not emphasize communication variables inherent in the speech field. While all of the authors whose books are examined would admit that psychological factors form a substantial base for interpersonal communication processes, psychology is not their primary area of focus. Trying to distinguish those texts with emphasis on psychology from those written for the speech field is extremely problematical since titles are often similar and there is no indication of the authors' discipline. In developing a bibliography a reasonable strategy seemed to be to compile a list of interpersonal texts reviewed in the major speech journals. These journals included: Quarterly Journal of Speech, Communication Quarterly, Communication Monographs, Southern Speech Communication Journal, Western Speech Communication Journal, Central States Speech Journal, and Communication Education. Since the area of interpersonal communication is relatively young, the examination was limited to material appearing in the last decade.

Over one hundred texts were reviewed in these journals; however, a representative group of sixteen text books have been chosen for examination. These texts were mentioned consistently in the bibliographies of other texts.

The following passage written by Pace and Boren in the preface of their interpersonal text entitled The Human Transaction offers an accurate introduction to the following survey:

The position which interpersonal communication occupies in the broad field of speech communication as a whole has not been clearly and fully defined yet. Certain commonalities exist, and a certain degree of overlapping is both inevitable and desirable. Necessarily, therefore, the writing of books involving definitions and distinctions in these areas is fraught with ambiguities in approach and content. We feel, however, that whatever distinctions may exist are primarily matters of emphasis rather than divergence in the kinds of concepts¹ being treated or the particular theories being analyzed.

As Pace and Boren have noted, the concepts outlined in interpersonal text books are often ambiguous and overlapping. This is particularly true in discussions concerning the self. It has been stated earlier in this thesis that Frederick Perls' concepts of Gestalt Therapy deal with the process of self growth as that process relates to both the individual and his environment. Since his theories are particularly applicable to self processes, it is important to know how the interpersonal literature covers this concept.

The ambiguity of terms relating to the self became apparent in attempting to develop a systematic means of examining the instructional

¹Wayne R. Pace and Robert R. Boren, The Human Transaction: Facets, Functions, and Forms of Interpersonal Communication (Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman, 1973), p. vii.

material chosen for this study. For example, the same terms were used to denote different things by many authors. Similarly, many authors offered no clear denotative terms for concepts being presented. After an initial examination of the interpersonal material, the concepts were essentialized into seven categories relating to the self to be used in the detailed examination of the interpersonal texts. These categories are:

1. the self and interpersonal communication
2. self awareness
3. self concept
4. self acceptance
5. self assertion
6. self actualization
7. self disclosure

Since there is no consensus as to the definition of these terms as they are used in the texts, the writer developed the following "consensus" definitions. Even though "self" is not one of the categories appearing on the list to be surveyed, a definition is in order. Self may be defined as the dynamics of the person. The concept involves all of the factors of knowledge about that person. The self and interpersonal communication refers to the degree to which the self is analyzed to gain insight into interpersonal communication. After this general idea is explored, more specific terms are surveyed. The term self awareness is frequently referred to as self perception and implies an understanding of self. Self concept refers to how the individual feels about himself.

Obviously there must be a sense of awareness to develop a self concept. Self acceptance implies that the individual not only know himself but that he is satisfied with himself. By self assertion the writer is referring to the individual's process of expressing himself as he is motivated by values or needs. Self actualization implies a continual process of self growth. It is a means of reacting within a dynamic environment. Finally, self disclosure is viewed as a means by which the individual shares himself as discovered in the categories above with others. It must be noted that although the texts are surveyed for the inclusion of self disclosure, detailed reviews of this category are not included as the theories of Perls are not specifically related to this area. In keeping with this focus, the following survey places emphasis on both the general methodologies and philosophies employed by each author as well as the authors' coverage of the categories listed. The writer will point to those places where ideas of Perls are mentioned even if Perls himself is not referred to.

Reaching Out: Interpersonal Effectiveness
and Self-Actualization

The first text to be examined was written by David Johnson and is considered a pioneer book in interpersonal communication. The book entitled Reaching Out: Interpersonal Effectiveness and Self-Actualization appeared in 1972. The material came largely out of a project known as Project Youth--Youth Reaching Youth. The project was instigated on the hypothesis that youth and young adults could be trained to become perceptive of lonely and alienated peers and learn to establish

interpersonal relationships with them. The basic premises of the project were that there are youth and young adults who need support from their peers and are receptive to this help but will not seek out such help and that the qualities of support warmth, and understanding when shared can supply missing and important factors in a person's life. The purpose of the book is to offer information and exercises that will help others increase their skills in initiating and maintaining friendships. Relating this purpose back to the premises of Project Youth, Johnson states that:

Because man is a social animal, most of his happiness and fulfillment rests upon his ability to relate effectively to other humans. In addition, the foundations of all civilizations rest upon man's ability to cooperate with other humans and to coordinate his actions with theirs. . . . There is no way to overemphasize the importance of interpersonal skills in our lives.²

Clearly Johnson places interpersonal communication at the center of civilization and in the mainstream of the individual's existence.

In his text, Johnson covers five of the seven categories listed. He cites self awareness, self acceptance, and self disclosure as a means of reaching self actualization. Finally, throughout his discussion of self processes, he ties the self to interpersonal communication. Johnson begins his text with the idea that self actualization is, ". . . an increasingly important concern for many people."³ He continues by covering three other categories concerning the self. Johnson begins

²David W. Johnson, Reaching Out: Interpersonal Effectiveness and Self-Actualization (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 1.

³Johnson, p. 2.

with self awareness and self acceptance. The means by which he presents his discussion of these concepts include such models as the Johari Window and Harris' concepts of "I'm OK--You're OK." Also included are self appraisal exercises and trust exercises. As will be noted later, these same materials are covered in a majority of the other interpersonal texts examined. Johnson further believes that these two processes are integral in achieving self disclosure. He views self disclosure as an integral part of interpersonal communication. As a means to that end, he believes that unless an individual is fully self aware and self accepting the quality of self disclosure will be diminished. This in turn results in lower quality interpersonal communication.

The ultimate end of these processes is self actualization. In explaining this concept he says that, "Self-actualization consists primarily of being time-competent, that is, of having the ability to tie the past and the future to the present in meaningful continuity while fully living in the present."⁴ Being time-competent is directly related to being autonomous. Johnson defines the autonomous person as being "liberated from rigid adherence to parental values or to social pressures and expectancies. He flexibly applies his values and principles in order to behave in ways appropriate to the situations he is in."⁵ The autonomous person can be compared to what Johnson calls the "inner-directed person" (the person who sticks with values and

⁴Johnson, p. 2.

⁵Johnson, p. 3.

principles adopted early in life no matter what the situation) and the "other-directed person" (the person who conforms rigidly to whatever values or principles will gain him approval from others). In relating the concept of time-competence to the autonomous person, Johnson says that:

The time-competence and the autonomy of the self-actualizing person are related in the sense that a person who lives primarily in the present relies more upon his own support and expressiveness than does a person living primarily in the past or in the future. To live fully in the present means that you must be autonomous of both rigid inner values and excessive needs to conform to social prescriptions to obtain approval from other people.⁶

According to Johnson, through relating to people in time competent and autonomous ways, the individual achieves self-actualization. He sees self-awareness and self-acceptance as some of the skills necessary in developing good interpersonal communication. Viewing the process of self-actualization as the end result Johnson involves self-disclosure, saying that:

Such openness depends upon your self-awareness and your self-acceptance; if you are unaware of your feelings and reactions you cannot communicate them to another person and if you cannot accept your feelings and reactions, you will try to hide them.⁷

This hiding of feelings clearly affects self actualization and therefore effects interpersonal communication.

In summarizing the concepts presented in Johnson's book two factors are important to recognize. The first is that Johnson firmly states that the quality of an individual's self-awareness, self-acceptance, and

⁶ Johnson, p. 3.

⁷ Johnson, p. 3.

ultimately self actualization plays an important role in the development of quality interpersonal communication. Secondly, Johnson recognizes the importance of living in the present. By achieving a strong sense of the now, the individual achieves self-actualization. This same point is strongly asserted by Perls as noted earlier in this chapter.

Bridges Not Walls: A Book About Interpersonal Communication

The second text to be examined is entitled Bridges Not Walls: A Book About Interpersonal Communication. Edited by John Stewart, this book first appeared in 1972 and had subsequent editions appearing in 1976 and 1982. As a basis for this text, Stewart works on two assumptions: (1) "the quality of each person's life is directly linked to the quality of the communication he or she experiences,"⁸ and (2) "there is a basic movement in the human world and it is toward relation not toward division."⁹ With these two assumptions in mind, Stewart's text covers three of the categories surveyed. These categories are self and interpersonal communication, self awareness, and self concept.

The author's ideas on self and interpersonal communication are most clearly explained in the discussion of his second assumption. Stewart believes that relating is a basic part of our world. This relating

⁸ John Stewart, ed., Bridges Not Walls: A Book About Interpersonal Communications, 3rd ed. (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1982), p. 6.

⁹ Stewart, p. 8.

process occurs through communication--in particular, interpersonal communication. Stewart states that:

. . . for interpersonal communication to happen, each participant has to be willing to share some of what makes him or her a person¹⁰ and to be aware of some of what makes the other a person.

The above statement suggests that communication is an integral part of our world and that in order to communicate interpersonally, the individual must have some understanding of himself as well as of the other person. The awareness that Stewart refers to is not fully explained however the above quote points out that the understanding of self or self awareness is important in interpersonal communication.

The idea of self-concept comes closest to further explaining Stewart's mention of self awareness. Stewart expresses concern for the individual who has an inadequate self concept. According to Earl C. Kelley writing in this text, "An inadequate concept of self, so common in our culture, is crippling to the individual." This limits the individual because, "When we see ourselves as inadequate, we lose our 'can-ness.' There becomes less and less that we can do."¹¹ If the individual is crippled, so are his interpersonal relationships. As a means of "healing" the individual Kelley suggests that, "The perceptive process is the only avenue by which the self can be fed."¹² The

¹⁰Stewart, p. 9.

¹¹Earl C. Kelley, "The Fully Functioning Self," in Bridges Not Walls: A Book About Interpersonal Communication, 3rd ed., John Stewart, ed. (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1982), p. 166.

¹²Kelly, p. 169.

individual has a "selective screen" which forms boundaries. The more facilitating the environment, the less protection is needed. When boundaries become thick or less permiable, the person becomes more and more isolated and communication shuts down. Kelley states that, "The self then is denied that which it feeds on."¹³

The important premise made by Stewart is that, ". . . interpersonal communication happens between persons, not between roles or masks or stereotypes."¹⁴ In order to have quality interpersonal communication, there must be an understanding of the individuals involved. A clear link is made between the importance of self awareness and self concept to interpersonal communication.

Speech Communication: An Interpersonal Approach

Upon review of Bormann and Bormann's text Speech Communication: An Interpersonal Approach, this writer discovered that it is a basic text designed to be used in introductory courses of speech communication. An explanation of their "interpersonal approach" as offered in the preface is:

The objective of a good course in interpersonal communication is to provide an educational experience that will be of lifelong daily use to the student.¹⁵

The authors wish to achieve this by presenting basic concepts of speech communication in a "practical for every day" manner. Chapters provide

¹³Kelley, p. 170.

¹⁴Stewart, p. 5.

¹⁵Ernest G. Bormann and Nancy C. Bormann, Speech Communication: An Interpersonal Approach (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. ix.

basic information on channels of communication, verbal communication, nonverbal communication, how to inform, persuasive powers of the personality suggestion, and evidence and reasoning, group communication, listening skills, analyzing the audience, and large group communication. Chapter Six of Bormann and Bormann's text is entitled "How to Talk to Another Person."¹⁶ This chapter is the only chapter dealing primarily with communicating interpersonally. It is in this chapter that the authors bring forth their presentation of three of the categories surveyed. First they discuss the self and interpersonal communication. This discussion blends into their presentation of self disclosure which in turn includes a brief mention of self concept.

In discussing the idea of self and interpersonal communication, Bormann and Bormann apply the basic communication model including the variables of source, receiver, message, and feedback. In this chapter they recognize the importance of self observing that, "Certainly any course in interpersonal communication must include the probing of one's own basic reactions to life, to situations, and most of all, to people."¹⁷ They follow this quote with a discussion of self-disclosure as a means of improving two-person communication. The authors do make reference to the idea that discovery of self-concept is a difficult life time project however they offer no real suggestions on how to go about this process; merely that the individual should. If the individual

¹⁶ Bormann and Bormann, p. 99.

¹⁷ Bormann and Bormann, p. 108.

remembers the principles set forth by Stewart and Kelley, it would appear that Bormann and Bormann have omitted an integral step in the interpersonal communication process--that of self awareness. In order to self-disclose, the individual must know who self is. Similarly, the concepts of self acceptance and self actualization are not included. This writer notes that in relating the importance of Bormann and Bormann's text to this study, the authors reemphasize the importance of self to interpersonal communication.

The Dynamics of Human Communication:
A Laboratory Approach

In their text The Dynamics of Human Communication: A Laboratory Approach, Myers and Myers focus on human interaction. As with the text by Bormann and Bormann, this relatively new concept appeared in the speech literature around 1972 and 1973. Myers and Myers note that the content and method they use in their book is derived from their teaching experiences and comes from a broad spectrum of disciplines. These authors feel strongly that a text book is for the students. Therefore they have written it to be read, keeping "communication jargon" to a minimum so that no previous introductions to the field of speech communication are needed. This style is repeated in many of the books subsequently examined in this chapter. To help facilitate a readable style, Myers and Myers begin each chapter with a good preview.¹⁸ Three

¹⁸Gail E. Myers and Michele Toleda Myers, The Dynamics of Human Communication: A Laboratory Approach, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973).

of the seven categories are covered in their text. The authors begin with a discussion of self and interpersonal communication. They continue by stating that the development of self concept is the purpose of interpersonal communication. Self awareness is briefly mentioned as also being important in interpersonal communication.

Myers and Myers are very articulate about their position on how the self relates to interpersonal communication. They say that:

We all need one another to conduct the business of our lives; ultimately, our interpersonal communication is our only source of validation for what goes on inside us and in our world.¹⁹

For these authors, the purpose of interpersonal communication is self validation development of self concept. They go on to say that "you" is the most important factor because your self concept affects other concepts or perceptions of you. According to Myers and Myers, the individual sees himself in relation to the roles he chooses or is forced to play. These authors again use the Johari Window as a means of expounding on this point. They do not, unfortunately, offer any concrete means by which these roles can be either incorporated into the self or dispelled.

In discussing self awareness, Myers and Myers feel that communication is all around each individual in all of his senses--sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell. They state that, "Understanding ourselves and our relations to these stimuli is the starting place for understanding our own communication behaviors and those of others."²⁰ For these

¹⁹Myers and Myers, p. 139.

²⁰Myers and Myers, p. 124-5.

authors, self awareness is synonymous with understanding. If the individual understands himself or is self aware, he will better understand his own communication. As with Myers and Myers' discussion of self concept, their discussion of self awareness is only touched on. The mentioning of both categories in relation to self and interpersonal communication is, however, nicely written and easy to understand.

The Human Transaction: Facets, Functions,
and Forms of Interpersonal Communication

Also appearing in 1973 was the text The Human Transaction: Facets, Functions, and Forms of Interpersonal Communication authored by Pace and Boren. Pace and Boren clearly state that, "our intentions--in the main--are to integrate in a more balanced manner communication theory with the analysis and practice of sound interpersonal interaction."²¹ Rather than dividing their text into chapters on verbal and nonverbal communication, message variables, etc., the authors integrate the principles of interpersonal communication in discussing the development of productive interhuman relationships. Their text is basically divided into three areas of discussion: clarification, verification, and amelioration. These authors' discussion of the self appears in the section dealing with amelioration. Pace and Boren define this term as having to do with affective responses or feelings. They note that a person's feelings about himself have three dimensions: (1) cognitive, (2) affective, and (3) behavioral.²² Cognitions refer to what the

²¹Pace and Boren, p. viii.

²²Pace and Boren, p. 247.

person believes about his characteristics, affects are the feelings the person experiences toward his characteristics, and the behavioral component implies that the end develops predispositions for talking about or responding to his characteristics.

Pace and Borens' coverage of the seven categories surveyed is difficult to ascertain. The authors speak of "self-image" which the writer has interpreted as self concept. throughout their discussion references are made as to the relation of self to interpersonal communication. From these ambiguous statements the writer attempts to summarize Pace and Borens' ideas on the category of self and interpersonal communication.

Pace and Borens' discussion of the category of self concept is seen as they discuss "self-image." They believe that the self-image is, "acquired through and reinforced by interaction with others, as well as through our own abilities to take cognizance of what we do and what we look like."²³ The authors continue by explaining that the individual sees himself as having positive and negative qualities which are rejected or reinforced depending on the sources of his contact. The best sources of contact are naturally those that are loving and trusting relationships. Pace and Boren note the importance of "honestly 'being' yourself" but offer no concrete means of achieving this state. They do however echo Perls in their brief discussion of "trusting yourself." Pace and Boren write that:

²³Pace and Boren, p. 248.

Trusting yourself in the here-and-now places the emphasis on feelings of self worth emanating from an adequate, ongoing performance. This kind of self-trust says, in effect, that both the making of excuses based on past performance and the making of promises of future performance²⁴ contradict the exhilaration of living fully at the moment.

As with Perls, the idea put forth by Pace and Boren is that a proper development of self must take place in the present. The individual must trust himself here and now in order to live fully.

Not only is Perls' position on the importance of working in the here and now reiterated by Pace and Boren, but they create a bifurcated idea of the purpose self in relation to interpersonal communication. Communication with others enables the individual to develop a concept of self both through the reactions of others and his own cognitive abilities.

Interpersonal Communication:
Basic Text and Readings

Patton and Giffin's text Interpersonal Communication: Basic Text and Readings was drawn from the two previous texts: Fundamentals of Interpersonal Communication and Basic Readings in Interpersonal Communication. The two previous texts were published in 1971 and the latter compilation was published in 1974. The 1974 combination offers a balance between text and reading, the text used as an introduction and preview to the readings. Patton and Giffin feel that one reinforces the other thus offering a strong body of information on interpersonal communication. According to Patton and Giffin, "The purposes of this

²⁴Pace and Boren, p. 253.

book remain twofold: to present valid data on interpersonal communication to the student who possesses no specialized background, and to provide insights for improving our relationships with others."²⁵ As has been seen earlier, writers of text books on interpersonal communication have become concerned with reaching novice students. To this end, Patton and Giffin present the concept of communication as an aspect of the individual's life that he can use to his advantage. They say that:

We have the capacity for controlling and choosing among alternative patterns of communication behaviors. By understanding the interactive, ongoing, process nature of interpersonal communication, it becomes possible to alter elements within the process with more predictable results.²⁶

Patton and Giffin then see communication as a dynamic process which can become predictable through understanding the elements involved. Their definition of interpersonal communication is much more specific. Patton and Giffin offer a list of five premises which they call "Characteristics of Interpersonal Communication."²⁷ Their list appears as follows:

1. The Interpersonal Communication, Both the Generator and the Attributor of Meaning Must Be Present.
2. Each Person Assumes Roles as Both Sender and Receiver of Messages in Interpersonal Communication.
3. In Interpersonal Communication, the Sender and the Receiver Are Interdependent.
4. Since Interpersonal Communication Relies on Behaviors, We Must Be Satisfied with Degrees of Mutual Understanding.
5. Interpersonal Communication Involves Mutual Needs to Communicate.

²⁵ Bobby R. Patton and Kim Giffin, eds. Interpersonal Communication: Basic Text and Readings, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. x.

²⁶ Patton and Giffin, p. 45.

²⁷ Patton and Giffin, pp. 48-51.

This list offers the most specific outline of what interpersonal communication is that appears thus far. Patton and Giffin's definition implies that in interpersonal communication, those parties communicating must both be present (face to face interaction), and that the element of feedback must be utilized. While both sender and receiver work interdependently, their perceptions are contingent on their experiences. Finally, both parties communicating have a need to communicate.

As it is with many texts, determining exactly which of the surveyed categories Patton and Giffin cover in their texts is somewhat difficult. Their coverage becomes muddled as terms are used interchangeably. Of the seven categories, self and interpersonal communication, self awareness, and self actualization that are spoken of most thoroughly.

Although the idea of self and interpersonal communication is touched on in various portions of this text, the clearest statement of position as to the relation between self and interpersonal communication reads as follows:

There is the tacit admission that communication is the foundation for all of our interpersonal relationships--its relevancy and significance for our lives can hardly be overemphasized. Yet only recently have attempts been made to translate behavioral theories into research-based foundations for personalized growth and development.²⁸

In other words, Patton and Giffin are saying that the ideas of the self are important in the individuals' interpersonal communication.

Patton and Giffin go on to cite their primary goal in studying interpersonal communication as, "to become more aware of ourselves and

²⁸Patton and Giffin, p. 45.

our potentials as communicators."²⁹ In their discussion of self awareness, the authors again place emphasis on the self as playing an integral role in the development of interpersonal communication. The idea of self awareness is touched on continually throughout the text. As with the category of self and interpersonal communication, a clear presentation of self awareness does not appear. The fact, however, that the idea of self awareness is touched on continually throughout the text makes this writer believe that Patton and Giffin assume that their readers understand self awareness to be a major goal of interpersonal communication. They do offer an explanation of the Johari Window as a means of explaining how the student can become more self aware.

Some 400 pages after their treatise on self awareness, Patton and Giffin present material dealing with the concept of self actualization. These authors believe that:

Inherent in the process of self-actualization is interpersonal communication. For a person to get to know himself well, to understand how he/she might become better, to envision himself/herself being better, and to change his/her ways ^{almost} always requires interaction with helpful others.³⁰

For Patton and Giffin, interpersonal communication is part of the process of self actualization. They offer the concepts of self disclosure, feedback, and trust as a means of accomplishing self actualization. These concepts are inherent in the process of interpersonal communication.

²⁹ Patton and Giffin, p. 45.

³⁰ Patton and Giffin, p. 437.

The first edition of Interpersonal Communication: Basic Text and Readings is the first text found that mentions Frederick Perls. The mention appears in an article by Everett L. Shostrom entitled "The Manipulator" which is reprinted in Patton and Giffin's text.³¹ The Shostrom article deals with the idea of manipulation as it effects interpersonal relationships. Shostrom's acknowledgment of Perls' philosophies is first seen in his dealing with the causes of manipulation. Shostrom says that, "I would agree with Frederick Perls that a basic cause for manipulation lies in man's external conflict between self-support and environmental support."³² As an example Shostrom uses the employer/employee relationship. He concludes that:

Not trusting himself for self-support, man believes his salvation lies in trusting others. Yet, not trusting the other person completely, modern man manipulates the other in an effort to support himself in the process.³³

The second acknowledgment of Perls comes by way of Shostrom utilizing a concept of Perls' called topdog/underdog.³⁴ Unfortunately, however, Shostrom's interpretation of this concept is inaccurate. According to Perls, when considering the characteristics of topdog and underdog, "The person is fragmented into controller and controlled. This inner conflict, the struggle between the topdog and the underdog, is never

³¹Everette Shostrom, "The Manipulator," in Interpersonal Communication: Basic Text and Reading, 1st ed., Bobby R. Patton and Kim Giffin, eds. (New York: Harper and Row, 1971, p. 416.

³²Shostrom, p. 481.

³³Shostrom, pp. 418-19.

³⁴Shostrom, pp. 419-20.

complete, because topdog as well as underdog fight for their lives."³⁵ The key phrase is "inner conflict." For Perls, topdog and underdog are two personalities that reside within each individual much the same as what Freud termed the ego, superego, and id. The topdog is the righteous authoritarian and the underdog is the passive manipulator. The distinction between topdog and underdog is accurately described by Shostrom. His misinterpretation occurs when he places these two different characters within two different persons: one person acts as topdog and one person acts as underdog. Perls states explicitly that the topdog and underdog reside within one person causing inner conflict not outward conflict as suggested by Shostrom.

It is interesting to note that one other mention of Frederick Perls appears in the third addition of this same text by Patton and Giffin. Brown and Van Riper write in their article "The Role of Speech in Human Relationships" that:

A gestaltist like Fritz Perls tries to help the client know when his nonverbal behavior (his³⁶ voice and mannerisms) matches or belies his verbalization.

While this observation is accurate, it is at best, brief. Brown and Van Riper's acknowledgment of Perls does offer the reader information of other theorists that he might find useful and insightful.

³⁵ Frederick S. Perls, Gestalt Therapy Verbatim (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), p. 19.

³⁶ Charles T. Brown and Charles Van Riper, "The Role of Speech in Human Relationships," in Interpersonal Communication in Action: Basic Text and Readings, 3rd ed., Bobby R. Patton and Kim Giffin, eds. (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 339.

Human Communication: An Interpersonal Perspective

In keeping with the cross-disciplinary approach taken by most writers of interpersonal communication, Tubbs and Moss state that, "Our dual focus . . . is on speech communication and on social psychology" ³⁷ Their book entitled Human Communication: An Interpersonal Perspective, exemplifies this focus. The five sections of their text include discussions of basic communication concepts, social psychology as it relates to the communicative process, verbal and nonverbal messages, speaking situations (two-person, small group, and public), and finally a conclusion. The concluding chapter which is entitled "Enhancing Interpersonal Relationships" is where the majority of information concerning the self and interpersonal communication is found. ³⁸ In this chapter the authors note that:

Today we are witnessing a growing interest in all methods of self-development, but particularly in those directed at interpersonal relationships. ³⁹

For Tubbs and Moss, self-development is one of the important methods for building interpersonal relationships. Within their discussion of self development appear the terms self awareness, acceptance, actualization, and disclosure. As with Johnson and Stewart, self actualization is discussed through an explanation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Also in keeping with earlier authors, self awareness is discussed by

³⁷ Stewart L. Tubbs and Sylvia Moss, Human Communication: An Interpersonal Perspective (New York: Random House, 1974), p. xi.

³⁸ Tubbs and Moss, pp. 293-316.

³⁹ Tubbs and Moss, p. 310.

explaining the Johari Window. Tubbs and Moss merely mention self acceptance as a possible outcome of accepting others. Finally it would appear that of these categories, the authors favor self actualization as they conclude by saying that, "As you complete this course, we encourage you in your efforts to reevaluate and improve your interpersonal skills as part of a continuing process of self actualization."⁴⁰

Tubbs and Moss' discussion is obviously brief. As with many authors writing in this area of interpersonal communication, their distinction of concepts concerning the self is difficult to determine. These authors do at least offer support for the idea that self and interpersonal communication are related. They do not, however, offer any new or concentrated information regarding self awareness, concept, acceptance, or actualization.

Dyadic Communication: A Transactional Perspective

The next text to be examined is authored by William Wilmot and entitled Dyadic Communication: A Transactional Perspective. Wilmot defines dyadic communication as, "two people involved in a face-to-face transaction between two people, whether it be fleeting or recurring"⁴¹ Although two-person relationships occur that are not face to face, Wilmot does not include these transactions in his discussion.

⁴⁰Tubbs and Moss, p. 310.

⁴¹William W. Wilmot, Dyadic Communication: A Transactional Perspective (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), p. 4.

Keep in mind that one of the premises of interpersonal communication as defined by Patton and Giffin was that it is a fact to fact interaction. The idea of dyadic communication being transactional is based on three assumptions: (1) that we are effected by the perceptual process. This is to say that each person's reality is contingent upon the process of his assumptions, (2) our perception of someone and our behavior to that perception can change the behavior of that person. The example given by Wilmot is that the individual probably would behave differently around his parents than he would around his girlfriend or boyfriend, and (3) each person is affected by the other.

In his text, Wilmot primarily discusses the category of self concept. Through this discussion, Wilmot attempts to show how self concept is related to interpersonal communication. This is not, however what the writer defines as a discussion of self and interpersonal communication. The author concludes by making a brief mention of self assertion but it is never fully developed.

In explaining self concept, Wilmot says that:

One's self-concept is maintained at reasonable levels because of selectivity. Selectivity takes many forms, all of which serve to give some stability of one's self-concept. In general, (1) we can selectively expose ourselves to individuals who support our self-concept, (2) we can selectively interpret either our or the other person's behavior, and (3) we can selectively choose the goals we wish to achieve.⁴²

The way in which the individual perceives himself is not only a result of his interactions with others but his perception of self may directly

⁴²Wilmot, p. 52.

effect these same interactions. For Wilmot, then, self concept has a direct relation with interpersonal communication.

As a final note as to Wilmot's contributions, it must be recognized that Wilmot is one of the only writers to offer a concrete suggestion for dispelling of problems connected with the self. In particular, the problem which entails asserting independence from roles. His suggestion is seen in offering the Gestalt Therapy Prayer printed earlier in this chapter. Accurately citing Perls as the author, Wilmot believes that this poem is, "one of the most dramatic attempts to assert independence from the roles others assign for us" ⁴³ Although the mention of Perls is brief, it definitely asserts his principles as having merit in the explication of self related processes.

Communicating Personally: A Theory
of Interpersonal Communication

In describing their text Communicating Personally: A Theory of Interpersonal Communication and Human Relationships, Rossiter and Pearce write that:

This book is about interpersonal communication and the role it plays in the development and maintenance of human relationships. The way we feel about ourselves, about others, and about life itself depends largely on the relationships we are able to establish with other persons. ⁴⁴

⁴³Wilmot, pp. 50-51.

⁴⁴Charles M. Rossiter, Jr., and W. Barnett Pearce, Communicating Personally: A Theory of Interpersonal Communication and Human Relationships (Indianapolis: Bob-Merrill, 1975), p. 3.

Writing more generally, Russel Windes proclaims that:

This book presents an original theory of interpersonal communication. Professors Rossiter and Pearce have perceived a convergence of various writers, especially humanistic psychologists such as Maslow, Rogers, and Jourard, on similar concepts.⁴⁵

This writer notes that Rossiter and Pearce are not the first nor are they the last to utilize the concepts of Maslow, Rogers, and Jourard. The authors' organization of material is unique in that they present this material in three sections each of which they define as "harder" than the preceding one. The authors believe that this makes their text applicable to varying levels of understanding.

Interpreting how Rossiter and Pearce view the seven categories outlined for this survey is difficult. Their discussion follows no clear pattern and their treatment of terms relating to the self is brief and arbitrary. As a general statement it may be observed that Rossiter and Pearce cover the categories of self and interpersonal communication, self awareness, and self actualization. This pattern is not, however, all together obvious. The authors begin with their ideas on how self and interpersonal communication are related. This discussion quickly turns into a treatise on awareness in general. The authors conclude with the idea of self actualization. Although little emphasis is placed on the idea of self actualization, it appears that this concept should be the goal of the individual.

⁴⁵Russel R. Windes, "Editor's Forward," in Communicating Personally: A Theory of Interpersonal Communication and Human Relationships, by Charles M. Rossiter, Jr., and W. Barnett Pace (Indianapolis: Bob-Merrill, 1975), p. vi.

Rossiter and Pearce begin with their discussion of self and interpersonal communication. As was stated in the quote by these authors earlier, they believe that the way the individual feels about himself depends largely on the relationships he is able to establish with others. These relationships can be either personal or impersonal. The key to distinguishing which type of interpersonal relationship the individual is involved in is found in the concepts honesty and validation. If the individual is not honest and/or is not validating in his relationships, the relationships are considered impersonable. A good interpersonal relationship is one that is personable--honest and validating.⁴⁶ To make the change from impersonal to personal relationships takes awareness. Rossiter and Pearce say that:

The point is this: we frequently overlearn ways of doing things that are less than optimal. Through gaining awareness of these overlearned styles we can change our ways of doing things in directions we think are desirable.

We believe that most people could benefit from an increased awareness of overlearned communication behaviors
⁴⁷

The answer that Rossiter and Pearce offer for the question of creating good interpersonal relationships is increased awareness. Frederick Perls says essentially the same thing advocating increased awareness as an important step in the individual's growth process. Since these authors have already placed an importance on the fact that interpersonal relationships help the individual to develop a sense of himself, it is only natural that awareness of both relationships and self is important.

⁴⁶ Rossiter and Pearce, pp. 3-5.

⁴⁷ Rossiter and Pearce, p. 5.

As a final note, Rossiter and Pearce point out that self actualization, being in full control, is achieved through full awareness. Self actualized persons communicate with more honesty and validation than do non-self actualized persons.⁴⁸ As was stated at the first of this examination, Rossiter and Pearce seem to state that the all important factor is that the individual is self actualizing. The way that he does this is by becoming aware. As was also noted in this segment, the importance of awareness is a global concept offered by Frederick Perls.

Between People: A New Analysis
of Interpersonal Communication

Miller and Steinberg's text Between People: A New Analysis of Interpersonal Communication was published in 1975. One of the primary goals of this text as voiced by its authors is to develop a distinction between interpersonal and noninterpersonal communication. They place emphasis on examining interpersonal communication from a relational perspective while recognizing factors that influence an individual's ability to communicate.⁴⁹ Miller and Steinberg distinguish interpersonal and noninterpersonal communication in this way:

When predictions about communication outcomes are based primarily on a cultural or sociological level of analysis, the communicators are engaged in noninterpersonal communication; when predictions are based primarily on a psychological level or analysis, the⁵⁰ communications are engaged in interpersonal communication.

⁴⁸ Rossiter and Pearce, pp. 174, 178, 202.

⁴⁹ Gerald R. Miller and Mark Steinberg, Between People: A New Analysis of Interpersonal Communication (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1975).

⁵⁰ Miller and Steinberg, p. 22.

This view is considerably more narrow than those offered by earlier writers. According to Miller and Steinberg, in order to interpersonally communicate, the individual involved must have gained insight into unique characteristics of each other rather than seeing them as defined by cultural attributes or social roles.

The authors primarily focus on two of the categories surveyed: the self and interpersonal communication and self disclosure. In discussing the self and interpersonal communication Miller and Steinberg mention the terms self actualization and self identity. It is not clear, however, exactly what the authors definition of these terms is. They appear to act as generic terms for any and all processes concerning the self.

In discussing their conception of the self in relation to the function of interpersonal communication, Miller and Steinberg take a position that is somewhat different from those taken previously. Earlier in this section authors have generally discussed this connection in either one of two ways: they either see self actualization as a means of developing good interpersonal relationships or they see interpersonal relationships as a means for developing self actualization. Miller and Steinberg believe that the development of self identity is an important by-product of communication.⁵¹ While they seem to be closest to the latter position outlined above, they seem to view the development of self identity as an added extra rather than a planned

⁵¹ Miller and Steinberg, p. 63.

or anticipated occurrence. Similarly the authors state that their approach to communication, "does not include intrapersonal communication or communication 'with yourself.'"⁵² Rather than seeing the development of self identity as the function of communication, these authors feel that controlling the environment, "so as to realize certain physical, economic, and social rewards from it" is the function of all communication.⁵³ Miller and Steinberg believe that the reassurance or affirmation desired by an individual in an interpersonal relationships does not result from another person's communication skills but rather from his value judgments. The idea of viewing self growth as a function of interpersonal communication is therefore invalid because the occurrence of self identity development is not a result of the communication process but rather of other individual's value judgments.

This writer must note the fallacy in such logic. According to Miller and Steinberg a person's self identity is developed as a result of other individual's value judgments. In order for the person to understand the other person's value judgments, those value judgments must be communicated to him. The process of self identity is therefore developed as a result of communicating value judgments. This writer must also note that where Miller and Steinberg may not offer a logical argument concerning the development of self in relation to communication, these authors do offer some excellent information concerning interpersonal relationships.

⁵² Miller and Steinberg, p. 44.

⁵³ Miller and Steinberg, p. 44.

Intimate Communication

As a departure from the previous approaches to interpersonal communication, Phillips and Metzger published their text entitled Intimate Communication in 1976. These authors' approach is highly rhetorical as they rely largely on the concepts of George Herbert Mead author of Mind, Self, and Society. Phillips and Metzger state that, "Mead, himself does not refer to rhetoric, but the shaping of power of significant others is highly rhetorical."⁵⁴ Within these authors' discussion is found two of the categories surveyed. The first is that of self and interpersonal communication. As will become clear, this concept is primary in all of Phillips and Metzger's discussions. Second, the authors refer to self esteem (self acceptance) as the most important outcome of interpersonal communication.

Phillips and Metzger begin with a discussion of self and interpersonal communication. The authors feel that, "All humans struggle to make some identification of themselves that will guide them through their social life." They echo Mead saying that:

. . . most of our moves toward others are designed to get responses from the others that will help us identify ourselves. That means that the bulk of our communications to others are designed to evoke a specific response to our own declaration of who we are.⁵⁵

⁵⁴Gerald M. Phillips and Nancy J. Metzger, Intimate Communication (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1976), p. 119.

⁵⁵Phillips and Metzger, pp. 10-11.

Stating this same position more concisely, "The results of our actions shape our identity."⁵⁶ Phillips and Metzger clearly advocate the position that the individual's relationships shape his understanding of who he is. They reiterate saying that:

Self, then is defined by other people. The notion "real self" sold by humanistic psychologists cannot exist in a rhetorical model. Whatever the role possibilities, they do not exist to others until others have had a chance to see them.⁵⁷

These authors make an important note that the individual must be aware of: just as others motivate or control him, he does the same for others. Although the individual is shaped by interpersonal relationships with others, those others are at the same time being shaped by their interpersonal relationships with him.

Phillips and Metzger present an intrapersonal concept referred to as "I and ME". As a basic distinction, the I selects goals while the ME discovers and plans strategies. The two entities relate dialectically. The ME is what is projected outside--what other people see. The I has needs that it must have gratified and it is the responsibility of the ME to gratify those needs within the confines of the social system. These authors note that ME can tell I to go to blazes if I begins giving orders that do not fit the norms of that social system.⁵⁸ In many ways, "ME becomes a projection of a role designed to bring a specific response from other people."⁵⁹ Phillips and Metzger believe that:

⁵⁶Phillips and Metzger, p. 109.

⁵⁷Phillips and Metzger, p. 119.

⁵⁸Phillips and Metzger, pp. 121-22.

⁵⁹Phillips and Metzger, p. 133.

The consideration of I and ME is central to the operation of an interpersonal rhetoric. We must make requests to others.⁶⁰

It is imperative that the individual relate to the environment what his needs are in order for those needs to be gratified. Thus the rhetorical process is clear: each individual needs the interpersonal process in order to gratify his needs which is part of his process of self esteem. Phillips and Metzger say that, "the most important goal of an interpersonal rhetoric is enhancement of self esteem."⁶¹

In summary, it is important to recall the two new concepts presented by Phillips and Metzger. First, these authors are the first to state that the process of interpersonal communication is rhetorical in that it is used in order to gratify the individual's needs. Second, Phillips and Metzger offer the first clear recognition to the idea of intrapersonal communication with their concept of I and ME. Although only two of the defined categories are adequately discussed, Phillips and Metzgers' text has a great deal of merit. Rather than simply reiterating what previous authors have said and reinterpreting the secondary sources which they have used, these authors have offered a fresh contribution to the literature on interpersonal communication.

Interpersonal Communication Journal

Phelps and DeWine's book, Interpersonal Communication Journal, is innovative in its presentation of materials in comparison with the books

⁶⁰Phillips and Metzger, p. 122.

⁶¹Phillips and Metzger, p. 133.

examined thus far. Phelps and DeWine's book provides a format for creating an interpersonal communication journal. Their premise is that the journal provides a means by which students may keep a record of their out of class interpersonal experiences. The reference material presented comes from other texts in the field including Bormann and Bormann, Patton and Giffin, Pace and Boren, and Miller and Steinberg. Although these references are offered, the authors emphasize that, "The correct answer of most questions in this journal is your honest reaction."⁶² It would appear that Phelps and DeWine's view of interpersonal communication includes the same concern for self honesty as was advocated by Rossiter and Pearce. Phelps and DeWines' coverage of the surveyed categories include self and interpersonal communication, self awareness (which they term understanding and self discovery), and an entire chapter on self disclosure. Although the authors' presentation of self disclosure will not be discussed, the writer would like to point out that Phelps and DeWines' interpretation of the Johari Window appears in this chapter.

In their segment entitled "To the Student," Phelps and DeWine state their position concerning self and interpersonal communication. These authors believe that the process of interpersonal, "is joyous because as we study the process . . . we begin to grow as individuals."⁶³ Later in

⁶²Lynn Phelps and Sue DeWine, Interpersonal Communication Journal (St. Paul: West, 1976), p. vi.

⁶³Phelps and DeWine, p. vi.

their chapter entitled "The Process of Self-Discovery" the authors offer a similar quote by Ed Rintye:

Trying to understand my communication behavior without understanding myself is like trying to perceive⁶⁴ an iceberg by looking only at the tip above the water line.

Emphasis on this position can be seen when examining the authors' three objectives:

1. To improve your ability at interpersonal communication by discovering yourself.
2. To allow you to discover yourself by examining your reactions to others.
3. To begin the process of self-disclosure by means of self-discovery.

The continue by saying that, "As we learn more about ourselves, we become better interpersonal communicators."⁶⁵ Clearly, these authors advocate an understanding of self as a means of enhancing interpersonal communication.

The authors hope to encourage the completion of the objectives cited above through basic exercises. These exercises include having the individual select words that he feels describe how he would like others to perceive him, discovering the discrepancies between how he wishes to be perceived and how he is actually perceived, examining how well the individual feels he communicates, discovering internal dialogues, and determining with whom the individual prefers to converse. The section on internal dialogues is a most applicable and fresh approach in light of the other texts examined. Phillips and Metzger spoke of the I and ME working dialectically however they only touched on the interaction

⁶⁴Phelps and DeWine, p. 63.

⁶⁵Phelps and DeWine, p. 64.

involved and its implications. While Phelps and DeWine's discussion of internal dialogues is not exhaustive, it does present a clearer picture of this concept.

In discussing the exercise connected with the concept of internal dialogues, the authors offer the following objective:

To allow you to understand better the dilemmas and paradoxes within our own attitudes that lead to ambiguous or inconsistent behavior.⁶⁶

They speak of the individual as having a "complex internal society" and believe that, "We need practice in listening to and making use of our internal voices just as we need practice in listening to and participating more effectively with the other persons in our external society."⁶⁷ The authors request each student to "tune in on" one of his internal dialogues and write a script of this discussion. The characters might be his optimistic self versus his pessimistic self or himself as leader versus himself as follower or the self he desire to be verses the self he is reluctant to be. As will be shown in Chapters III and IV, Frederick Perls' concept of topdog/underdog affords a more detailed explanation of this important concept dealing with internal dialogues. The contribution of Phelps and DeWine in recognizing the existence of internal dialogues as a means of self discovery is a welcome novelty in the interpersonal literature.

⁶⁶Phelps and DeWine, p. 73.

⁶⁷Phelps and DeWine, p. 73.

Communicating in Dyads:
A Pragmatic Orientation

As has been done by numerous authors, Wilcox and Wilcox chose to approach interpersonal communication by placing emphasis on the application of real life situations in their discussion. This is evident by the title of their text, Communicating in Dyads: A Pragmatic Orientation. These authors note that, "We have found role-playing to be of particular value in the teaching/learning process about dyadic communication."⁶⁸ As a means of defining dyadic communication, Wilcox and Wilcox state that it is, "A species of the study of communication, the distinguishing characteristic being a limitation to face to face interaction allowing for immediate feedback."⁶⁹ Patton and Giffin define interpersonal communication in essentially the same manner. Wilcox and Wilcox continue by saying that it is an understanding process taking place in both formal and informal, everyday situations. Interpersonal concerns a "two-way mutual reciprocity" dealing with people and relationships. Although it utilizes verbal skills, interpersonal communication fosters an increased concern for many nonverbal variables. The ultimate goal being "good" communication.⁷⁰ Their book consists of case studies followed by evaluation forms used by the student to critique the situations described. The only category appearing within this text is self and interpersonal communication. Although it is the

⁶⁸ James R. Wilcox and Ethel M. Wilcox, Communicating in Dyads: A Pragmatic Orientation, 2nd ed. (Rochester, N.Y.: PSI Publishers, 1977), p. 2.

⁶⁹ Wilcox and Wilcox, p. 4.

⁷⁰ Wilcox and Wilcox, pp. 4-5.

dyadic/interpersonal communication processes that are most fully developed, the authors note in the exercises and definitions that the dyad is made up of individuals. However weak, it is a recognition of the self as inherent in dyadic communication. The categories of self awareness, self concept, self assertion, self acceptance, self actualization, and self disclosure are not discussed. Instead, the bulk of Wilcox and Wilcox's text consists of games and simulations focused on the understanding of communication processes. Although case studies are presented from which the student draws conclusions about the communication processes involved, this writer finds Phelps and DeWine's approach of keeping a journal a much more interesting and enlightening way of teaching the student through "every day" situations.

Interpersonal Communication:
A Social Exchange Approach

The next text to be examined appears as part of "The Sage Communication Text Series." Published in 1981, Interpersonal Communication: A Social Exchange Approach was written by Michael Roloff. Roloff intends to draw a link between interpersonal communication and social exchange theories. He points out that several interpersonal texts hint at the idea that, "people tend to engage in certain communication behaviors with certain people, in certain situations which advance their own self-interest."⁷¹ He continues by asserting that, "The assumption that

⁷¹Michael E. Roloff, Interpersonal Communication: A Social Exchange Approach, Vol. VI of "The Sage Communication Text Series" (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1981, p. 11.

a motivating force in interpersonal communication is self-interest is consistent with the Social Exchange Theories."⁷² Chapter I deals with various definitions, Chapter II deals with explanations of various social exchange theories, and Chapters III through V attempt to link these theories with various aspects of interpersonal communication.

While Roloff's text is extremely well organized and approaches the subject of interpersonal communication in a new way, it provides little information for the enhancement of this study as the only category Roloff specifically discusses is self disclosure. The first category of self and interpersonal communication is eluded to in that he seems to agree with Phillips and Metzger that the purpose of interpersonal communication is to achieve something for the self. This in itself becomes his offering to the study: recognition of the fact that self communication is an important relation to interpersonal communication.

Personal and Interpersonal Communication:
Dialogue with the Self and with Others

The final text to be discussed offers an exception to the lack of explicit, fresh information on self in interpersonal texts. This exception is found in reading Makay and Gaws' book Personal and Interpersonal Communication: Dialogue with the Self and with Others. The approach taken by Makay and Gaw is largely humanistic. At the beginning of Chapter 1 they state their purpose, ". . . is to stimulate you to think seriously and feel deeply about the need for open, honest,

⁷²Roloff, p. 11.

meaningful, substantive, and often playful communication today in your life."⁷³ With this purpose in mind, Makay and Gaw are the only authors to expound on all seven of the categories dealing with self that were surveyed.

The authors begin by presenting an understanding of self and interpersonal communication. They say that, ". . . through communication we can continually come to deal with ourselves and others in satisfying and meaningful ways."⁷⁴ The assumption made by Makay and Gaw is that by participating in interpersonal communication, the individual learns to develop a sense of "selfness." This idea is carried out through the entire text.

The authors continue with a chapter on intrapersonal communication in which they cover the remaining categories of self awareness, concept, acceptance, actualization, and disclosure. Makay and Gaws' general discussion of intrapersonal communication reiterates the importance of self to interpersonal communication. They define intrapersonal communication as "talking within oneself."⁷⁵ Asserting that intrapersonal communication is essential to understand, the authors state that, "It is not only the basis of all our individual decisions and actions, it is a basis of our communication and actions toward other people."⁷⁶ In order

⁷³ John J. Makay and Beverly A. Gaw, Personal and Interpersonal Communication: Dialogue with the Self and Others (Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill, 1975), p. 5.

⁷⁴ Makay and Gaw, p. 6.

⁷⁵ Makay and Gaw, p. 16.

⁷⁶ Makay and Gaw, p. 17.

to understand any other communication process, the individual must understand his intrapersonal communication processes. More specifically they say that, "As we suggested before, authentic interpersonal communication begins with authentic intrapersonal communication."⁷⁷

The second half of the sentence quoted above reads, ". . . and authentic intrapersonal communication results from knowing yourself, accepting yourself, asserting yourself, and realizing yourself."⁷⁸ In other words, the individual must explore the processes of self awareness, acceptance (which includes self concept), assertion, and actualization. One of the most exciting facets of Makay and Gaws' text is that they fully explain these processes.

Beginning with the concept of self awareness, the authors say that:

We all have thoughts, feelings, and tendencies which affect our behavior. Therefore, we should try to understand or be aware of what is influencing our daily actions in order to redevelop more efficient, rewarding, and exciting communication with ourselves and others.⁷⁹

Makay and Gaw offer transactional analysis (parent, adult, and child ego states) as an aid to self awareness. In addition to the P-A-C model, Makay and Gaw state that, "Another theory that is helpful in self-awareness is Gestalt Therapy as conceived of by Fritz Perls."⁸⁰ They note that:

Through such techniques as dream therapy, in which one role plays the various people, objects, and events in his dreams; nonverbal awareness, in which the person role plays various

⁷⁷ Makay and Gaw, p. 169.

⁷⁸ Makay and Gaw, p. 165.

⁷⁹ Makay and Gaw, p. 152.

⁸⁰ Makay and Gaw, p. 156.

parts of the body . . . indentifying top dog and underdog, in which one carries on a conversation between two opposing desires . . . Gestalt therapists lead their clients to self-awareness.⁸¹

Although specifics as to how to go about these exercises are not given, the mere mentioning of them asserts their potential in increasing self awareness.

Makay and Gaws' discussion of self acceptance includes their ideas on self concept. Self acceptance implies that the individual accepts himself as he is now without evaluation. The inclusion of self concept in this section is clear in the authors' definition of the term. They say that, "Self-concept is, simply, an attitude toward self, composed of beliefs about the self, emotions about those beliefs, . . . and the resultant tendency to respond, positively or negatively."⁸² Self concept then is inherent within self acceptance. The authors offer two steps for the individual to follow in learning to become self accepting. First the individual must acknowledge the fact that he is not infallible. The second step is understanding that there is a difference between having thoughts and feelings and acting on them. One must be honest about his feelings, negative or positive, about things and accept them. He must however also realize that acting on these feelings is something entirely separate.

Self assertion is the process by which the individual takes responsibility for acting upon his thoughts and feelings. The P-A-C model is again used to exemplify the process. Makay and Gaw point out

⁸¹ Makay and Gaw, p. 157.

⁸² Makay and Gaw, p. 27.

that as long as the adult stays in control, the individual will be acting responsibly.

In explaining self actualization, the authors rely heavily on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. They note emphatically that working toward self actualization entails working through self awareness, acceptance, and assertion. At this point all that is left is to bridge the gap between the individual and the other and that is done primarily through self disclosure.

The authors obviously enhance the students' understanding of self processes by offering specific guidelines toward achieving the "selfness" which all of the writers in interpersonal communication say is so important. The reader has seen how the mentioning of ideas conceived by Frederick Perls was used in enhancing part of this text. As was stated in Chapter I, it is the writer's contention that the ideas of Perls can be utilized in a similar manner so as to create meaningful explanations of understanding self processes.

It is the conclusion of this writer that the majority of the text books in interpersonal communication are in actuality basic speech communication texts with a new twist. That twist is seen in the presentation of material as a means for the student to relate basic principles of speech communication to his own relationships. Most authors write with what they call an "interpersonal approach" or what this writer calls the "friendly approach." These authors presentations are not solely related to interpersonal communication as the titles and prefaces suggest. Rather, the presentations are that of basic speech

communication principles presented in a less technical, less academic fashion. Their purpose is that of showing the practicality of the field. While this approach is admirable in that the information does indeed offer practical information which is applicable in all fields of study, readers must recognize that the majority of these texts are not purely interpersonal communication texts. There were, however, problems in the instructional material. The problems encountered in this examination were two-fold. First, as was repeatedly recognized, no author systematically used all seven of the categories listed. Whereas many authors may have used various categories, these authors were frequently referring to different concepts. The obvious problem then is that there is no real consensus as to what the subcategories of "self" are. The further explanation of these subcategories are for the most part ambiguous or nonexistent. The second problem is an extension of the first. The ambiguity or deletion of thorough explanations results in a lack of full understanding of the concepts dealing with the self. Since all of the authors whose texts were examined express the importance of understanding the "self" in order to achieve effective interpersonal communication, it seems a gross act of negligence to omit information which not only fully explains these concepts but more importantly offers information by which the student can achieve a feeling of self awareness, self actualization, or whatever the author chooses to call achieving "self-ness."

It becomes obvious that without exception, all authors note the importance of self as it relates to interpersonal communication.

However, with the noted exception of the Makay and Gaw text, the choice of material and information presented is monotonously similar and affords virtually nothing but a realization of the problems. For this reason, this writer advocates an enhancement of the literature with solid, fresh material dealing with self awareness, acceptance, assertion, and actualization. The subsequent chapters offered as a means for discovering possible material for this enhancement.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Purpose

This section will explore ways through which the principles of Gestalt Therapy which deal with the self can be used to enhance the instructional materials in interpersonal communication. Chapter II introduced the reader to some of the Gestalt Therapy theories that deal with the self. These theories included perceptual restructuring devices and self-torture games. The knowledge gained helped answer the first thesis question: How do the principles of Gestalt Therapy as described by Perls address the concept of self? In Chapter III sixteen representative interpersonal text books were examined to determine basic concerns in self communication. The examination represented an attempt to answer the second thesis question posed in Chapter I. The general finding was that although interpersonal texts all mention various terms dealing with the self and although they deem the concept of self to be important to the understanding of interpersonal communication, the concept of self is not thoroughly covered. The third thesis question asks: Can the principles of Gestalt Therapy dealing with the self be used to enhance the instructional material in interpersonal communication? This question will be addressed by inserting information provided in Perls' Gestalt Theory into the categories of interpersonal communication discussed in Chapter III. Finally, the writer will offer a brief summary and suggestions for future study.

Correlation of Gestalt Therapy and Interpersonal Texts

Perls' coverage of both the perceptual restructuring devices and self torture games relays an understanding of prohibitive self processes and continues to explain ways in which the individual can alter these processes. Since the texts surveyed neither offer adequate explanations of self concepts nor provide suggestions for self improvement the concepts of self developed in Perls' Gestalt therapy could be used to enhance this portion of the interpersonal literature. To further explore this hypothesis, the writer will examine each category of the self outlined in Chapter III and show how the Perls material can be used to enhance what has already been written.

Recall in Chapter III the writer defined "self" as a concept that involves all of the factors of knowledge about a person. The seven categories surveyed in this chapter included:

1. the self and interpersonal communication
2. self awareness
3. self concept
4. self acceptance
5. self assertion
6. self actualization
7. self disclosure

As the writer stated in Chapter II, the category of self disclosure will not be discussed as to its correlation with the Perls material because Perls' theories do not directly address this concept. Self disclosure

was included for the purposes of ascertaining what concepts the interpersonal literature was covering.

The self and interpersonal communication was the only category addressed by every author in the texts surveyed. By self and interpersonal communication the writer is referring to the degree to which the self is analyzed to gain insight into interpersonal communication. Since the purpose of exploring this question was primarily to show the importance placed on self as it relates to interpersonal theory, the Perls material has little relevance to this category. It must be noted, however, that Perls uses the term interpersonal in his writings on self processes.

To demonstrate the similarity between interpersonal theorists and Perls, several quotations are presented. Myers and Myers note that, "our interpersonal communication is our only source of validation for what goes on inside us and in our world."¹ Pace and Boren believe that the individual's "self-image" is, "acquired through and reinforced by interaction with others."² More directly, Phillips and Metzger assert that, "self, then is defined by other people."³ All three of these quotations exemplify the importance placed on the understanding of self

¹Gail E. Myers and Michele Toleda Myers, The Dynamics of Human Communication: A Laboratory Approach, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 20.

²Wayne R. Pace and Robert R. Boren, The Human Transaction: Facets, Functions, and Forms of Interpersonal Communication (Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman, 1973), p. 24.

³Gerald M. Phillips and Nancy J. Metzger, Intimate Communication (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1976), p. 58.

processes to interpersonal communication by authors of interpersonal literature. Recognizing this same correlation between self and interpersonal processes, Perls notes in his writing on retroflection that a certain amount of retroflection is healthy, "provided it does not include trying to gratify for oneself what are genuinely interpersonal needs."⁴ The editors of Gestalt Therapy Now make a similar observation as did this writer. In discussing Perls philosophies of self development, they write that:

Gestalt therapy is strongly allied with this developing position, emphasizing positive directions and goals of living and using techniques directly and immediately designed to produce them. The implicit message of Gestalt therapy as translated into treatment is that there are values in living that persons know from their observations of others to be valuable and enhancing.⁵

These editors' statement supports the idea that Perls' theories express a correlation between self and interpersonal processes. These quotations by both interpersonal writers and Perls offer a noteworthy parallelism between the theories of Perls and of those authors writing interpersonal texts. For both there is no question concerning the importance of self as it relates to interpersonal communication. As stated earlier, no attempt is being made to show how Perls can enhance this particular category of self and interpersonal communication. It is

⁴Frederick S. Perls, Gestalt Therapy Verbatim (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), p. 45.

⁵Joan Fagan and Irma Lee Shepard, eds., Gestalt Therapy Now: Theory, Techniques, Applications (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 1-2.

clear, however, that Perls addresses primarily concepts of the self with an interest in the self's role in interpersonal communication.

The largest problem with interpersonal authors' coverage of these seven categories is that they do not explain why the individual is not self aware, why he has a poor self concept, why he can not accept himself or assert himself. Many authors do suggest that self actualization results from reaching self awareness, good self concept, acceptance, and assertion. This however seems difficult without further information which these interpersonal authors do not offer. How can an individual truly improve his self concept without understanding what he does or what has happened to thwart this process? The contention of this writer is that the individual can not become aware, assertive, actualized and so on without understanding what processes keep him from these states of self-ness. Lacking in the interpersonal literature is this type of information. Frederick Perls provides information pertaining to the integral process of understanding the "road blocks" in self growth. Remember that Perls' Gestalt Therapy is dedicated to helping the individual to grow.

In examining each category dealing with self surveyed in the interpersonal texts to determine how Perls can be integrated, the writer begins with the category of self awareness. Six of the interpersonal authors merely note this category's importance. Johnson and Tubbs and Moss use the Johari Window as they explain that awareness is a means of achieving self disclosure. Both Stewart and Patton and Giffin recognize the importance of self awareness but offer no further information as to

where this process is to be placed in the development of self. Phelps and DeWine go so far as to note that, "As we learn more about ourselves we become better interpersonal communicators,"⁶ again indicating that awareness is important however, like the others, they do not continue their discussion.

One of the more articulate authors on the subject of self awareness is Rossiter. Rossiter says that to change relationships from impersonal to personal, entails awareness. The individual must be aware of ways he behaves that are contrary to good communication. This position is close to Perls' position, however Myers and Myers bring their reader even closer when they note that awareness is the starting place.

Perls presents awareness as the first step for self growth. He believes that the individual must concentrate on each "symptom"--he must be aware of the problems within the self before he can continue to grow. Using Perls' contribution, self awareness would be presented as the starting place. The student would be taught that he must first become aware that there are reasons that he can not reach self-ness. The specific blockages of which the individual should be aware of are described in Chapter II and include retroflection, introjection, projection, and topdog/underdog. The next step, then, is to examine how these blockages relate to self concept, self acceptance, self assertion, and self actualization.

⁶Lynn Phelps and Sue DeWine, Interpersonal Communication Journal (St. Paul: West, 1976), p. 64.

In the discussion of self concept, the interpersonal authors fall into two groups. The first consists of those who merely recognize that an inadequate self concept is not good and those who attempt to explain self concept. Two authors state that inadequate self concept is undesirable. Johnson states that an inadequate self concept is crippling and says that if the self is crippled so are his interpersonal relationships. Bormann and Bormann are even more brief as they remark that the discovery of self concept is difficult but should be done. They offer no explanation of why it is difficult nor do they provide suggestions for self discovery.

The second group of authors suggests that the individuals' concept is related to the roles he plays. Myers and Myers comment that the individual sees himself in the roles he plays while Pace and Boren more specifically state that the individual has positive and negative qualities which are developed by contact with others. Both Myers and Myers and Pace and Boren are hinting at the idea that the individual's self concept consists of roles that are developed by contact with others. The problem here is that these authors do not offer their reader a clear understanding of how the individual develops these roles and why they are evidently not "good." As was noted earlier, the first step of achieving a good self concept is understanding or being aware of factors creating a poor self concept.

Perls provides excellent explanation as to why the individual's self concept becomes distorted in his discussion of introjection. Myers and Myers and Pace and Boren begin correctly in noting that self concept

becomes developed through contact with others. The individual creates roles or ways of acting that are in keeping with societal norms. Perls addresses the problem of introjection by explaining that the individual takes in ideas, feelings, and attitudes of society and acts as if they are his own when in actuality they are not. Creating a good self concept becomes a matter of the individual dispelling that information which he has blindly accepted and then reevaluating that information to determine what feelings or attitudes about himself are really his own. Once the individual knows which of the attitudes, beliefs, or feelings are really his, these attitudes become his own.

At this point the individual creates a self concept or way of feeling about himself with which he can deal. Whatever is wrong or disliked can then be dealt with to create a "good" self concept. Wilmot suggests that his students read the Gestalt Therapy prayer as a beginning to this process. Perls material on introjection as seen in Chapter III might be used following Wilmot's suggestion to explain to students that they have developed a less than adequate self concept because their self concept has been developed by others (introjects) rather than by themselves.

The ideas of self concept easily flow into ideas on self acceptance. The authors who deal with self acceptance include Johnson who uses Harris' "I'm OK--You're OK" to show the student that he is "OK," Phelps and DeWine's discussion which actually deals more with self concept than acceptance, and Tubbs and Moss who merely mention self acceptance as a possible outcome of accepting others. Makay and Gaw's

discussion offers two suggestions for their students to use in working toward acceptance. These are: (1) realizing that he is not infallible and (2) realizing that there is a difference between having thoughts and feelings and acting on them. With the exception of Makay and Gaw the interpersonal authors offer the student no understanding of what keeps him from accepting himself.

It is here Perls' therapy can be best utilized. The first suggestion made by Makay and Gaw is part of what Perls describes as introjection. The second suggestion is more articulately addressed in Perls' concept of projection. A projection is an attitude, trait, feeling, or behavior that belongs to the individual but that the individual experiences as attitudes, traits, feelings, or behaviors that are directed toward him. The individual projects his feelings rather than expressing them and thus accepting that part of himself. In Gestalt Therapy, the individual is taught to reown his projections. According to Perls and as discussed in Chapter III, the way to reown one's projections is to change them to retroflections. Retroflection is directly related to what interpersonal writers discuss as self assertion, another category surveyed in Chapter II. Before discussing the relation between self assertion and retroflection, the writer must point out the importance of Perls' contributions to the discussion of self acceptance. The idea of projection clearly points out how an individual manipulates himself to prevent accepting himself as he is. Perls' coverage of projection offers explanation for this manipulation as well as concrete techniques for stopping this manipulation and learning to be more self accepting.

In reading Perls' material, the student discovers that self assertion is a part of the process of self acceptance. Makay and Gaw, the only interpersonal authors to more than mention the term, see self assertion as a process through which the individual takes responsibility for his actions, thoughts, or feelings. As noted above, this is part of what Perls calls reowning projections. As with the other categories dealing with self, Perls' ideas contribute to this category by offering an articulate discussion on how to achieve self assertion. Perls' discussion related to self assertion encompasses his ideas on retroflection.

Retroflection deals with the idea that the individual does to himself what should be done to someone else. The definition of self assertion as presented in Chapter II is the individual's process of expressing himself as he is motivated by values or needs. When the individual has retroflective behavior he does not honestly express or assert himself; rather he hits himself instead of another, he hugs himself instead of asking for a hug, or he castigates himself rather than his best friend. None of the interpersonal writers offer a thorough examination of the implications that self assertion has in interpersonal relationships. Makay and Gaw define the process but this is all. Perls' discussion of retroflection as shown in Chapter III describes what the individual does instead of facing honest self assertion, shows the implications of such actions, and then offers suggestions for properly asserting self in communicative situations.

The last category surveyed in Chapter III was self actualization. This category is the most thoroughly covered category, however it is

here that the lack of creativity seen in other categories is particularly evident. Johnson, Stewart, and Tubbs and Moss rely totally on Maslow's hierarchy of needs for their discussion of self actualization. Patton and Giffin note only that interpersonal communication is part of the process of self actualization and offer feedback, self disclosure, and trust as a means for achieving this state. Rossiter and Pearce seem to feel that self actualization is important and manage to mention awareness as a solution.

One of the most prominent means for discussing self actualization is by asserting that it is the end product of all the other self processes. Johnson notes that self awareness, acceptance, and disclosure are means for reaching self actualization. He defines this process nicely through his discussion of being time competent and autonomous. Although Johnson notes that by reacting to people in time competent and autonomous ways the individual becomes self actualized, he goes no further to explain how to do this. Similarly, Makay and Gaw see self actualization as an end saying that the individual must work through awareness, acceptance, and assertion in order to reach an actualized state. These authors, like Johnson, Stewart, and Tubbs and Moss rely heavily on Maslow's ideas, which are inadequate as presented.

It would appear that the interpersonal authors believe self actualization represents an end result of other self processes and that in order to reach this end, the individual must fully understand all of the other self processes. This understanding must include the "road blocks" set up by the individual. According to the definition of self

actualization presented in Chapter II, self actualization implies a continual process of self growth. This type of continuing process implies that some sort of maintenance program must be instigated in order to assure the individual does not regress in the progress he has made understanding the other self processes. Much of the maintenance process includes dealing with inner conflicts or fights to regress to "bad habits." Although the authors addressing the idea of self actualization note the concepts' importance, they do not include material offering any suggestions for continuing the growth process much less for implementing such a maintenance program.

This writer suggests that Perls' discussion of topdog/underdog could be used as a vehicle for this discussion. Topdog and underdog work as two separate, articulate entities living within one individual. They are the source of a large amount of inner conflict as they fight for control of the individual. In listening to these two entities the individual is forced to exercise his self awareness as well as to assert his self concept and acceptance. By integrating a section on self talk similar to Perls' presentation of topdog and underdog, interpersonal authors would lead students to this kind of self discovery. This type of maintenance program offers the individual a means by which he can continue growing with little regression. He is forced to take responsibility for himself and with a steadily maintained self growth process comes self actualization. Perls' discussion of topdog/underdog shows how this process can hinder communication and the self growth process as well as explaining how the individual can use such a process

to his advantage. A similar process was hinted at by Phillips and Metzger as they spoke of the I and ME and then further explained by Phelps and DeWine in their discussion of internal dialogues. Neither of these authors, however, are as precise and exhaustive as is Perls in his explanations of topdog/underdog. Perls' material adds an articulate and much needed enhancement to the ideas already written on self actualization by persons in the interpersonal field.

Summary and Suggestions for Future Study

Perls' concepts of projection, introjection, retroflection, and topdog/underdog clearly afford additional information that can be implemented into the textual material on interpersonal communication to offer students a more thorough understanding of the self processes already discussed by authors of these texts. How future writers of interpersonal texts chose to include the Perls material is a matter to be determined by the author's purpose and organizational structure. This writer has offered one way in which the concepts of Gestalt Therapy can be used to enhance the interpersonal material. Further implementation is left to future writers' discretion.

Also left for future study is the developing of consensus definitions for self processes within the area of interpersonal communication. As was continually noticeable in discussions relating to the self, the writers of interpersonal text books not only had different ideas of what terms to use but more importantly they frequently differed in their usage of the same term. Finally, this writer would like to pose a question for future writers in interpersonal communication: Should all

of the material discussing the self, generally termed intrapersonal communication, be separated from the rest of the interpersonal information? The authors who have already written texts in the area of interpersonal assert that with a good understanding of himself, the individual can create more affective interpersonal relationships. Are the processes related to the self important enough that they should be treated thoroughly prior to introducing the other concepts of interpersonal communication?

The material outlined in this thesis will hopefully be used by future writers to help their readers gain a deeper and applicable understanding of the self processes. As Gerald Kogan noted in his dissertation, the principles and theories of Gestalt Therapy as conceived by Frederick Perls covers a diversity of fields of study and has served many people well. Kogan believes that, "The model and manner of Perls have profoundly affected the lives of thousands of individuals personally and professionally."⁷ The interpersonal material dealing with self processes is deficient. Perls offers refreshing insights into these processes which can be utilized within the interpersonal literature. Frederick Perls' concepts do offer a viable means by which the instructional material in interpersonal communication can be enhanced.

⁷Gerald Kogan, "The History, Philosophy and Practice of Gestalt Therapy: Theory of Human Nature and Conduct in Frederick Perls' Psychology," Diss. University of California, Berkeley, 1973, p. 35.

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