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Self-Regulation of the Therapeutic Meeting From Constructivist and Gestalt Therapy Perspectives: A Transcribed Experiment

Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb, a gestalt psychotherapist, and Michael Mahoney, a constructivist, agreed to co-lead a session with a client as demonstration during a conference in Esalen in November 2005. They had never worked together or previously exchanged any theoretical ideas. In this co-led session, they simply worked in their own style and theoretical frame of reference and adjusted to the novelty of the situation. The result was an impactful, therapeutic experience for the client, based on an articulated triadic therapeutic field. Besides the transcription of that work, the article includes a description of the theoretical background of Mahoney and Spagnuolo Lobb. This experiment opened many consequences for therapeutic praxis and training, such as the connection between theoretical frame and praxis, and the importance of flexibility in the psychotherapeutic attitude.

Key words: triadic field, co-therapy, contact-boundary, co-creation of perceptions, given situation, social-symbolic processes, ordering and organizing, epistemotion, COPs.

On November 16, 2005, during the conference “Evolution of Gestalt Therapy” organized by Gordon Wheeler at Esalen (California), Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb, a presenter at the conference, had been asked by a group of people attending her workshop “Co-creation of the Contact-boundary,” to videotape her work with a “demonstration client.” Spagnuolo Lobb first asked the demonstration client, Michael Clemmens, if he would agree to work with two therapists instead of one, the other therapist possibly being Michael Mahoney, another presenter at the conference. Clemmens agreed.