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ABSTRACT
                This paper calls attention to parallels in the literature of
adventure education and that of Gestalt therapy, demonstrating that both are
rooted in an experiential tradition. The philosophies of adventure or
experiential education and Gestalt therapy have the following areas in
common: (1) emphasis on personal growth and the development of present
potentials; (2) promoting growth through creation of disequilibrium and
tension; (3) "challenge" in adventure education versus the "creative
experiment" in Gestalt; (4) the impact on the learning or therapeutic process
by experiences "at the edge"; (5) characteristics of process and flow
(nonpredictability of experience, need for spontaneity and flexibility); (6)
focus on the present and concrete examples; (7) holistic approach to learning
or therapy; (8) Gestalt belief in self-organizing systems versus the
educational concept of constructivism; (9) transparent goals and limits; (10)
focus on internal control, self-evaluation, and self-responsibility; and (11)
confrontational approach to therapy or experiential group work. Gestalt
concepts may inspire the theory and practice of adventure education by making
practitioners more aware of what they are doing, and may be even more
valuable for the new field of adventure therapy. (Contains 42 references.)
(SV)

Gestalt and Adventure Therapy: Parallels and Perspectives

By Rüdiger Gilsdorf

"Anyone who has taught an Outward Bound course is aware that the spirit of a course often seems to move beyond the capabilities of the human beings involved" (Bacon, 1983, p. 54). Steven Bacon's impression is probably shared by many of us in the field of experiential and adventure education. We all have experienced moments of intense feelings, of connectedness, achievement and sometimes magic. And usually we would have trouble explaining what exactly happened, which actions, dimensions and factors in the field did most to influence this particular learning experience.

Adventure education is more than a set of challenging activities and it certainly is not a technical application of sophisticated methods. Some of its power is probably due to the closeness with nature, to the potential of wilderness as a healing place (Miles, 1993). But not always are we working close to nature, and even if so much depends on how we orchestrate the wilderness or adventure experience (Handley, 1997). My belief is that intuition plays a crucial part in the facilitation of experiential learning. But intuition is not simply a gift. It can be developed in an experiential process that is by experiences and the reflection upon those experiences. Existing frames of thought - theory - can guide the reflection in a helpful way. And in the process of developing a common language of what we are doing "intuitive knowledge must be translated back into concepts and models in a way that a connection with experience is kept" (Fuhr & Gremmler-Fuhr, 1995, p. 208, transl. rg).

Many links between adventure-based education and psychological schools or therapeutic concepts have been proposed including: Alfred Adler's individual psychology (Heckmair & Michl, 1993), Helmut Schulze's bordersituation therapy (Amesberger, 1992; Heckmair & Michl, 1993), Steve de Shazer's solution focused approach (Gass & Gillis, 1995), Milton Erickson's utilization approach (Bacon, 1993; Itin 1995), and social learning theory and systems theory (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1994). For the emerging field of adventure therapy such links will be even more relevant. Schoel, Prouty & Radcliffe (1988) argue that for adventure based counseling "the range of possible theoretical underpinnings is wide" (p. 26), while Amesberger (1992) points out problems that might arise if approaches from humanistic psychology and behaviorism with their different and somewhat contradicting philosophical background are mixed together.

Humanistic psychology itself is a wide and diverse field. A closer look at this field might show that it has a lot to offer in terms of a framework for adventure education and in particular for adventure therapy. Humanistic psychology and experiential education have common roots and share common visions. In the following I want to illustrate this for one of the branches of humanistic psychology: Gestalt therapy.

Gestalt

Explaining Gestalt therapy could easily fill a lengthy article in itself. In essence, one might say that it is an approach to therapy, which tries to deal with personally significant themes in a way that they are brought back to life. Gestalt therapists have therefore developed or adapted a spectrum of methods, and as Gestalt-work can be quite dramatic sometimes, these methods seem to have drawn more attention than their underlying principles. In this paper however, I will not encourage using Gestalt-methods in adventure therapy. Rather I'm following Laura Perls (1989), one of the co-founders of Gestalt-therapy, who argues that "Gestalt-therapy offers a philosophical framework, within which different therapeutic techniques can be applied"(p. 177, retransl. rg). "The fundamental ideas of Gestalt therapy are rather philosophical and aesthetic than technical. Gestalt therapy is an existential-phenomenological approach and as such experiential and experimental" (Perls, 1989, p.107).

Thus I will try to elaborate concepts that Gestalt therapy and the philosophy of experiential education have in common. I will elaborate on the implications these concepts have for the further development of experiential education and adventure therapy. The proposed concepts in this paper are very much interrelated with each other and of course the chosen structure can only be seen as one among many possibilities. However, I hope that the paper might be helpful in the attempt to clarify our basic working principles and to strive for consistency in the experiential approach.

A final word concerning semantics in this paper: I will most often refer to adventure education, yet I do not distinguish very clearly between the terms adventure education, experiential education and adventure therapy. Roughly, I see adventure education as an expression of the philosophy of experiential education. Adventure therapy is pragmatically understood as the therapeutic applications of adventure education rather than a new school of therapy. I will also use the term Gestalt, referring principally to Gestalt therapy, but also to the earlier movement of Gestalt psychology and the more recent Gestalt education. In this sense, Gestalt theory is a body of thought that is rather spread out than condensed in one systematic framework.

The Challenge of Growth

"The average person of our time, believe it or not, lives only 5% to 15% of his potential at the highest...So 85% to 95% of our potential is lost, is unused, is not at our disposal" (Perls, 1969, 31). Other than psychoanalysis with its prevailing emphasis on the understanding of the past and behaviorism with a strong interest in changing problematic behavior, the focus of Gestalt therapy is on the realization of present potentials. Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1951) do give an impressive statement of their project when they formulate: "For our present situation, in whatever sphere of life one looks, must be regarded as a field of creative possibility, or it is frankly intolerable" (p. 299).

Consequently they claim " to psychologize without pre-judgements of normal or abnormal, and from this point of view psychotherapy is a method not of correction but of growth" (Perls et al., 1951, p. 284).

Adventure education has a high emphasis on growth too. Kimball and Bacon (1993) claim that "whereas most traditional treatment programs define the teenager as sick and dependent, in the wilderness the therapeutic journey is largely one of self-discovery and autonomy" (p. 34). Many authors agree upon the idea to concentrate on strengths, potentials and solutions rather than weaknesses, pathologies and problems (Fürst, 1992; Gass & Gillis,1995; Handley, 1992,). Interestingly Gestalt and experiential education do also have a similar model of how growth takes place. In Gestalt therapy growth is described in the context of a homeostatic process. Living systems tend to organize themselves in some kind of balance. When balance is lost, there are two major tendencies, one towards stabilization, security and maintenance, the other one towards change, growth and restructuring (Rahm, 1979). "The dynamic of living systems is characterized by an oscillation between the poles of conservation and change" (Fuhr & Gremmler-Fuhr, 1995, 118, transl.rg). Whereas conservation tends to regain the old balance, the change tendency leads to a new balance on a higher level - the essence of growth.

Nadler and Luckner (1992) do operate with the same concept of change when they describe growth as a process of testing the limits of the "comfort zone" and eventually venturing into "new territory" (p. 60). Disequilibrium or tension apparently are essential ingredients of the adventure based learning process (Nadler & Luckner, 1992) or wilderness experience (Handley, 1994). For the whole area of experiential education, John Dewey (1938) articulated this conclusion much earlier stating, "growth depends upon the presence of difficulty to be overcome by the exercise of intelligence" (p. 79).

"Challenge" has become a key word in adventure education and many activities have been invented to challenge participants in adventure programs. But challenge lies not in the activities themselves. It is nothing static, rather it is a way to deal with an activity or situation in a certain context. In Gestalt therapy a similar key concept is the experiment, or rather: to experiment. "The creative experiment, if it works well, helps the person leap forward into new expression, or at least it pushes the person into the boundaries, the edge where his growth needs to take place" (Zinker, 1977, p. 125). Applying the somewhat broader and more dynamic idea of experimenting to the adventure context could lead to the clarification of some experiential working principles, "Experiments are tools, and as such, they are meant to be constantly modified rather than exhibited as professional trophies" (Zinker, 1977, p. 147). In this sense, Rohnke and Butler (1995) contribute some practical ideas to changing games and sequencing, suggesting that it should be regarded as an art and undertaken with as much flexibility in mind as possible. The adjustment of the difficulty of the experiment according to the situation of a particular group is a critical aspect of the art of facilitation (Zinker, 1977). Murray (in: Rohnke, 1989) gives a vivid example of the many options that the classical initiative "spider's web" provides in this respect.

Experimenting is a creative play with the possible. Humor and play open horizons (Zinker 1977, p. 41). Most important, playfulness and seriousness do not exclude each other. The potential of humor, fun, fantasy, imagination and play has been stressed by Rohnke and Butler (1995) and Nussbaum (1993).

Experience at the edge.

One of the most widely accepted concepts of adventure education has become known as the "adventure wave" (Schoel et al., 1988, p. 27), that is the continuous cycle of brief, activity and debrief. Thinking in terms of the adventure wave has led to the common practice of scheduling periods of action and others of reflection. Nadler and Luckner (1992) are challenging this routine by defining the essence of adventure based learning as edgework. They argue that the most crucial moment in the learning process is the one when disequilibrium is at its maximum. It is then, that the decision whether to turn back or to break through into new territory is taken. "Usually these moments pass quickly without the awareness of individuals and are generally lost for current and future learning" (p. 61).

Processing therefore should concentrate on the moment of disequilibrium. Again this idea is supported by the Gestalt concepts of contact and contact boundary. "Contact is the awareness of and the interaction with the other, the different, the new, the strange. It is not a static situation in which one is or is not, but a dynamic action. I do make contact at the boundary between the other and me. The boundary...is the zone of arousal, of interest, of curiosity, of fear and hostility" (Perls, 1989, p. 109, retransl. rg). The interest of Gestalt therapy is focused on what happens at the contact boundary. It is seen as the moment and place, where learning can take place.

In adventure education, much of what we do is supporting, stimulating and even slightly pushing people to expose themselves to moments at the edge. Gestalt therapy however informs us that exposure to a situation is not enough. It will only result in a constructive learning process, if we are aware of ourselves at the edge, in other words, if we do make contact with the environment as well as with our feelings and sensations. In adventure education, we also tend to attribute the capacity of provoking edgework only to certain challenging adventure activities. But contact and contact boundary are universal phenomena applying to all experiences, not only to typically adventurous ones. Fürst (1992) takes this into account, when he suggests different types of edge-experiences, including struggling through, enduring, exploring personal boundaries and arranging relationships.

There might be many more occasions to working at the edge than we are usually aware of. But clearly it is not a reasonable idea to constantly operate at the boundary. We also need moments of rest. Gestalt therapy acknowledges this by describing life as a rhythm of contact and withdrawal. More detailed, Zinker (1977) specifies the stages of this cycle as sensation, awareness, mobilization of energy, action, contact and withdrawal. Interestingly again, Fürst (1992) has formulated a somewhat similar model of the activity circle with the stages awareness, action, evaluation and relaxation for adventure education.

Some consequences from the above ideas might be:

1) The adventure wave should be understood as a dynamic concept that does best unfold within a dynamic time frame. Moments of reflection might be appropriate at any time, not only after completing an activity.
2) Adventure can be rediscovered in the unspectacular. Some of the less dramatic activities within a program might eventually be most challenging for some of the

participants. Yet we need to encourage them to make contact with these rather new and unfamiliar challenges.

3) "One must have patience. The creative therapist can appreciate the process of his ongoing experience without "pushing" the river" (Zinker, 1977, p. 36). Becker's (1993) pleading to slow down the adventure process goes into the same direction. Times of rest and reflection therefore should be a natural component of a program.

Process and flow.

Perhaps life "...is an endless journey, its only meaning being to stay in motion and not to paralyze" (Fuhr & Gremmler-Fuhr, 1995, p. 187, transl. rg). In any case more than in the control of results, Gestalt therapy is interested in the process of experience itself. Fritz Perls has pointed out this idea quite sharply: "We will not look on the material, but on the process" (1976, p.76, retransl. rg). More precisely, Laura Perls formulates:

> The objective of Gestalt is the flow of awareness, the process of freely developing Gestalts, in which what is most important and interesting for the organism, the relationship, the group or society becomes the figure, can be entirely experienced and mastered, and then melts with the ground, to leave the scene for the next important figure. (1989, p. 98, retransl. rg)

Nothing is permanent everything is in flow. Even " the self constantly recreates itself and constantly dissolves itself" (Fuhr & Gremmler-Fuhr, 1995, p. 166, transl. rg).

According to Gestalt theory an unblocked process will result in good contact if the criteria of which Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1951) describe as "singleness; clarity; closure of the figure/background; grace and force of movement; spontaneity and intensity of feeling; formal similarity of the observed structures of awareness, motion and feeling in the whole; lack of contradiction of the several meanings or purposes" (p. 311). Parallels to the flow concept, which is quite often referred to in experiential education, are evident. Csikszentmihalyi (1987) mentioned the following criteria of flow experience: Choice; centered awareness; feeling of competence and control; clearness of objectives and feedback; melting of action and consciousness, transgression of personal borders.

The recent AEE definition of experiential education also stresses process orientation: "experiential education is a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill and value from direct experiences" (Proudman, 1995, p. 1). However, as Bob Lentz (1976) confirms, a focus on process does not automatically imply that content is disregarded: "Somehow all the talk about growth and the value of the process has a hollow ring to it when the magazine, or the play, or the trip, or the dory are of poor quality or have to be cancelled" (p. 86). And with reference to Ruth Cohn's (1992) theme centered interaction, Heik Portele argues for "the praise of the third thing" (p. 137): only with a common task people are able to unfold all of their personal potential and their social capabilities. As in our daily lives we are almost programmed on being result-focused, realizing a process-orientation in adventure programs provides a real challenge. It might therefore be helpful to keep some basic principles in mind:

1) Non-predictability of experience needs to be acknowledged (Portele, 1992). We have to give up the illusion of being able to control the outcomes. The recent AEE

principles of experiential education practice express the same insight. "Because the outcomes of experience cannot be totally predicted, the educator and learner may experience success, failure, adventure, risk-taking and uncertainty" (Proudman 1995, p. 21).

2) Spontaneous learning opportunities need to be recognized (Proudman, 1995). In fact, we should better be prepared to expect some of the most valuable learning opportunities arise from situations and activities that have not been scheduled. In this sense, flexibility to let go of a preplanned activity and to react on the reality of the situation is essential.

3) A new concept of success should be promoted. Acknowledging that learning is a highly individual process, we need to provide different levels of challenge within the activities. Measuring and comparing results usually is not very helpful. Instead, evaluating individual progress and welcoming mistakes as a natural and potentially promising part of the learning process should be encouraged.

Focus on the present.

Gestalt therapy is, as Fritz Perls (1976) formulates, a here and now therapy. That does not mean "... that we live for the moment, but that we live in the moment" (Zinker, 1977, p. 95). Basically, it reflects Kurt Lewin's realization that "no incident of the past, nor of the future, is relevant in the present, only how past and future incidents are represented in the present" (Walter, 1985, p. 83, transl. rg). John Dewey (1938) comes to a similar conclusion: "We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future" (p. 49). Extracting meaning depends, as he later points out, on observation and judgement. "The intellectual anticipation, the idea of consequences, must blend with desire and impulse to acquire moving force. It then gives direction to what otherwise is blind, while desire gives ideas impetus and momentum" (Dewey, 1938, p. 69). Dewey's pleading to combine direct experience with reflection upon experience has found a wide resonance in the theory and practice of adventure education, as mentioned above.

Gestalt therapy however brings the attention to another crucial ingredient without which experience will hardly result in learning: awareness. As a matter of fact, it might have been the most valuable contribution of Gestalt to the development of therapy that "the distant thinking and talking about living processes was replaced by awareness of the direct experience..." (Fuhr & Gremmler-Fuhr, 1995, p. 153, transl. rg). Awareness is, as Rahm (1979) defines, "a state of attentive awakeness towards the things that happen in the present moment in me, with me and around me" (p. 164, transl. rg).

While reflection emphasizes the value of thought, logic and rational distance, awareness reminds us of the reality and importance of feelings, sensations and direct involvement. Both certainly do not exclude each other in the process of dealing with experience. In a fast moving society full of distractions, training of awareness is not a high priority. Eastern schools of meditation have influenced Gestalt and other therapeutic approaches and provided valuable techniques for learning awareness. However, the facilitation of adventure programs in mind, some guidelines might help leaders and participants more fully engage in the present experience:

1) The presence of the facilitators, physical and emotional, is essential for the quality of the experiential learning process. Even when our role is to not actively engage, like during an initiative, we need to fully concentrate on the process, nonverbally communicating that we are present. In this sense, sidetalkes and preparation of oncoming activities are counterproductive.

2) The questions we ask do have a strong impact on whether participant's awareness is directed towards the present reality or not. What - and how - questions are more likely to shed light on the actual experience and open new insights and perspectives, whereas why-questions tend to distract our thinking into the past (Perls, 1976). Borton's model of sequencing the debrief along the questions "what?" "so what?" and "now what?" (Schoel et al. 1988, p. 170) seems to be founded on the same rational.

3) Rather than contenting oneself with abstractions, talking about concrete observations and examples should be encouraged (Polster & Polster, 1975). Abstractions, especially when used too early, allow us to distract from the present, while examples, based on a shared experience, usually have a higher potential to activate thorough reflection.

Holistic approach.

The whole is more than the sum of its pieces. The origins of this sentence lie in the realization of early Gestalt psychologists that perception does not function as an exact representation of the elements of reality in the brain. Rather the brain constantly organizes those elements and thereby creates something new. It creates a Gestalt, which clearly contrasts with the ground.

Lewin formulated a field theory (Walter, 1985) and later system therapy played a major role within the context of a general paradigm shift (Capra, 1996). An essential aspect of this shift is a new concept of human functioning. Breaking with a long tradition of splitting body and mind, under the new paradigm "thinking, feeling and sensation, spirit and body are seen as aspects of one and the same complex functioning, closely related to each other" (Fuhr & Gremmler-Fuhr, 1995, p. 28, transl. rg). Kurt Hahn's motto "learning with head, heart and hand" has received a similar popularity as the above Gestalt sentence. It has been formulated in opposition against a long tradition in education of emphasizing rational learning and devaluing feelings and sensations. Consequently, the body has received quite a bit of attention in adventure education, physical training being one of for central elements in Hahn's original concept. But in a holistic sense, integration of thinking, feeling and sensing into one and the same learning process is what counts and should rather be regarded as a challenge for experiential education than as something possessed by it.

Holistic learning has a spiritual dimension too, and thus dealing with values plays an important part. In Gestalt therapy the idea is to help people discover and explore their own values. According to Zinker (1977), Gestalt is a process of striving for depth and spirituality away from the "grease and oil" therapists, who "maintain society at the level of adjustment" (p. 121). The position of adventure education does not seem quite as clear. Kimball and Bacon state that "the Hahnian approach to education was not only experience-centered, it was also value-centered. And "Hahn's commitment to experiential learning and intellectual freedom was matched by an equally fervent commitment to a fairly traditional set of personal values" (1993, p. 12). However, in the actual AEE-

principles of experiential education practice a rather self-directed and truly experiential approach to dealing with values is favored, "opportunities are nurtured for learners and educators to explore and examine their own values" (Proudman 1995, p. 21).

Self-organization.

"In all evolutionary processes there is a dynamic of uncontrollable chaos and controllable order, and for thousands of years mankind tries to ban chaos in favor of order..." (Fuhr & Gremmler-Fuhr, 1995, p. 28, transl.rg). Control thinking, as Fuhr and Gremmler-Fuhr call it, is at the heart of the mechanistic paradigm that has strongly influenced psychology through behaviorism and far beyond. It is characterized by linear thinking in terms of cause and effect, as well as by a preference for hierarchical structures and external control.

Dewey draws a similar picture for the field of education: "The history of educational theory is marked by opposition between the idea that education is development from within and that it is formation from without"(1938, p. 17). And "the traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside" (p. 18).

According to Portele (1992) the most radical aspect of the Gestalt approach is its belief in self-organization. Self-organization theory claims that organisms and systems and thus humans too essentially determine from within how they react on external stimuli. "Living systems are self-organized and not controllable, the results of learning processes can not be told in advance and are only to a certain degree measurable and assessable..." (Fuhr & Gremmler-Fuhr, 1995, p. 147, transl.rg). In any case, the organism does have some kind of inner wisdom: "That what seems spontaneously important does in fact marshal the most energy of behavior, self-regulating action is brighter, stronger, and shrewder" (Perls et al.1951, p. 324). An early Gestalt concept in this context is the tendency to construct good Gestalts, which manifests itself in many laws of Gestalt psychology (Walter 1985).

Closely related to self-organization theory is the concept of constructivism with its thesis that all perception is subjective. There is no such thing as an objective reality: at best we can speculate about it. "We construct a, not the world" (Portele 1992, p. 33, transl. rg). Our constructions always are socially determined too: "Reality is nothing absolute, it changes with the group to which the individual belongs" (Lewin, cit. in Portele 1992, p. 34, transl. rg).

Self-organization is referred to in adventure education as well: "According to the basic conditions of an unfinished situation with serious character and situation-immanent problems, the experiential group must organize itself wherever possible" (Fürst 1992, p. 55, transl. rg). Yet while self-organization is understood in Gestalt as an orgasmic principle, its role in adventure education is often still be limited to a program component. On the other hand the discussion about empowerment (Kohn 1991) and constructivism (DeLay, 1996) is alive in the field. "Experiential education is not a series of activities done to a learner" (DeLay, 1996, p. 80). If we take this serious, a wide range of principles for experiential practice can be derived from self-organization theory.

Transparency.

From the beginning and throughout the process goals, possibilities and limits of the program should be transparent and open for negotiation. Fürst (1992) distinguishes

between given conditions, agreements, and decisions that are entirely up to the group or the individual and argues that it should be clear to everyone which topics fit into which category. The Project Adventure concept of the "full value contract" (Schoel et al., 1988), an agreement concerning ground rules of behavior and communication, is an example of this transparency.

Internal goals.

Genuine personal and group goals need to come from the participants. They should be seen as dynamic rather than static. Amesberger (1992) claims personal goal setting to be an essential feature of adventure education, and Schoel et al. (1988) try to give some guidelines for such a process.

> 1) **Internal control:** The tension between directivity and non-directivity in experiential education can be expressed by the "dynamic of the unfinished situation" (Fürst, 1992, p. 34). Facilitators take the responsibility to propose meaningful activities, the action then is controlled by the group itself, and the individual has the ultimate responsibility if and how to participate. "Challenge by choice" (Schoel et al., 1988, p. 130) is an example of this concept in adventure education.
>
> 2) **Self-evaluation:** Throughout the process, participants should be encouraged to give and receive mutual feedback as well as to reflect upon and evaluate their own learning process. This does not exclude feedback given by the facilitators. Yet being aware of the relative strong impact of such a feedback, it should be given with care.
>
> 3) **Self-responsibility:** AEE has found clear formulations for the sharing of responsibility in their principles of experiential education: "Experiences are structured to require the learner to take initiative, make decisions, and be accountable for the results." And: "The educator's primary role include setting suitable experiences, posing problems, setting boundaries, supporting learners, insuring physical and emotional safety, and facilitating the learning process" (Proudman, 1995, p.21). It could be added: Participants have the ultimate responsibility for the outcome of their learning.

Encounter as bedrock.

"Contact as a boundary phenomenon is only possible to the extent in which there is support for it" (L.Perls, 1989, p. 183, retransl. rg). Even more strikingly, Zinker (1977) formulates: "In order to help someone, you must love him in a basic, simple way. You must love the person who is before you and not a goal you set for him. You cannot love future images of the other without absenting yourself from the person sitting in front of you." (p. 23).

Being so focused on growth, Gestalt is a rather demanding and confrontative therapy. As growth unfortunately is not an easy path towards self-actualization, working through impasses goes along with frustrations. To develop self-support, we need enough support from our environment. Balancing frustration and support might in fact be the most essential art in therapy, counseling and education. As Fritz Perls (1976) puts it: "It is not easy to find the way through this contradiction, but once the therapist has solved the

paradox to work with support and frustration, his proceedings order themselves" (p. 96, retransl. rg).

What has been said above applies to adventure education and therapy as well. "Wilderness therapy, by design, is a frontal assault on learned helplessness, dependency, and feelings of low self-worth" (Kimball & Bacon, 1993, p. 20). It would be a good idea to back up this assault with some positive qualities in the relationship with our participants. Fürst (1992) draws the conclusion from this insight, when he proposes four different leader-functions, two of them, "companion in the experience" (p. 118) and facilitator stressing the relational work under quite different aspects.

Support is a relational phenomenon. The only way to give it is in genuine encounter with others. Martin Buber emphasizes the existential quality of dialogue. "Dialogue reduces mans isolation in his unique reality or at least help support it easier" (Fuhr & Gremmler-Fuhr, 1995, p. 107, transl. rg). Carl Rogers' clear understanding of this reality resulted in the development of client-centered therapy (Rogers, 1951) and in the postulation of three basic therapeutic principles, empathy, unconditional acceptance and genuineness. Greenberg, Rice and Elliott (1993) have integrated essential concepts from Gestalt and client-centered therapy, developing experiential guidelines for the facilitation of emotional change as a moment-by-moment process.

Taking the importance of a supportive relationship into account some final guidelines for the practice of adventure education and therapy include:

1) Contact is nothing static, building a good working relationship needs to be a permanent effort (Zinker, 1977, p. 129). Especially in the beginning of a session time should be set aside for connecting and reconnecting.

2) Relationships need time and freedom to develop. A program should therefore not be too structured. There should be a balance between periods of challenge; tension and confrontation with unexpected periods of low key familiar activity like walking or conversation.

3) Role-stereotypes are in the way of genuine contact. All technical aspects of adventure education should therefore be downplayed. The facilitator needs to be an expert in terms of security, but that doesn't imply any exhibition of personal outdoor-performance.

4) To remain sensible for the experience of participants, facilitators should continue exposing themselves to new and strange experiences. Adventure educators might want to look in particular for other than outdoor experiences. However, when appropriate, assuming the role of a companion in a joint adventure experience might be one of the most powerful ways to build a working relationship.

5) What has been called "resistance" in therapy might be understood as a natural and reasonable protection against too much challenge. Whenever resistance occurs it might therefore be a good idea to check if support instead of challenge is needed in that particular moment for that particular person.

Further Perspectives

By calling attention to parallels in the literature of adventure education and Gestalt therapy, I have tried to demonstrate that both approaches are rooted in an experiential tradition and in fact do have a lot in common. I have also tried to point out some practical implications, which a Gestalt-view on adventure education might have. In sum, my

assessment is that Gestalt concepts do have the potential to inspire the theory and practice of adventure education in several ways. They might help us come to a clearer understanding of what we are actually doing when using the adventure approach. They might be useful then in the further development of concepts and theories of experiential education. And finally, they might encourage us in being truly experiential in what we are doing.

All of the above might even be more valuable for the new field of adventure therapy, as therapy has been the background on which most of the Gestalt concepts have been developed. However, it has become clear in this literature research, that the Gestalt approach is only one part of a bigger picture. For one thing, there are other forms of experiential approaches like client-centered therapy, psychodrama and theme-centered interaction, which all have to offer valuable contributions to the theory and practice of adventure therapy. Even more important, recent research across many disciplines such as biology, physics and cybernetics has resulted in the proposition of a general paradigm shift in science (Capra, 1996) and social science (Fuhr & Gremmler-Fuhr, 1995) in the context of which experiential education might very well experience a renaissance.

Within the field of psychology, systems theory in particular seems to have been influenced by as well as contributed to the new thinking (von Schlippe & Schweizer 1996). It would thus be an interesting project to continue exploring on a broader basis the connections between humanistic psychology, the new thinking and experiential education. As a matter of fact, this would be in the sense of the founders of Gestalt therapy, which for now should have the honor to conclude this article with a final comment on that matter by Fritz Perls. He stated, "indeed, by and large the various theories are not logically incompatible and often neatly supplement and indirectly prove one another" (Perls, Hefferline & Goodman, 1951, p. 329).

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