Learning From Experience: The Oaklander Approach to Teaching Child Psychotherapists

PETER MORTOLA, PH.D.

ABSTRACT

Gestalt therapy theory places great importance on the role of the client's authentic experience in the therapeutic process (Latner, 1973; Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951; Polster & Polster, 1973; Wheeler, 1991). Authentic experience is also considered central when Gestalt therapy theory is applied to educational settings (Brown, 1971; Woldt & Toman, 2005). Dr. Violet Oaklander, a prominent Gestalt-based child psychotherapist, author, and therapist teacher/mentor, places great importance on the role of authentic experience for adults in her two-week intensive summer program on how to work therapeutically with children and adolescents. The aspects and implications of her experiential approach to teaching adults are explored and analyzed in the article with emphasis placed on the ways in which her approach to adult education is both developmentally appropriate and cross culturally relevant.

Peter Mortola teaches at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon where he is Associate Professor of Counseling and School Psychology. His book about Dr. Oaklander's training methods is due out this summer and is being published by the Gestalt Press.

Ansel Woldt, Ed.D., served as action editor on this article.

Learning From Experience: The Oaklander Approach to Teaching Child Psychotherapists

Introduction

Mental health professionals come from around the world to work with Violet Oaklander, author of *Windows To Our Children: A Gestalt Therapy Approach to Children and Adolescents* (1978). For over 20 years, individuals from more than a dozen countries have converged each July—first on Hermosa Beach, California (before 1987) and then in Santa Barbara, California—for a two-week training experience in the Oaklander approach to psychotherapeutic work with children and adolescents. Participants in her summer trainings represent a multinational mix of professionals visiting from countries as diverse as Canada, Germany, Chile, Ireland, Mexico, Israel, New Zealand, England, Australia, Denmark, South Africa, Turkey, Taiwan, and Saudi Arabia.

What is it about Violet Oaklander's (she prefers to be addressed as Violet) approach to teaching and therapy that draws child therapists, clinical and school psychologists, social workers, residential care supervisors, child psychiatrists, and psychiatric nurses from all over the globe? A large part of her international popularity with mental health practitioners stems from the unique character of her seminal text, *Windows To Our Children* (commonly referred to as "Windows" by those who have trained with her). This book, while twenty-five years old, remains a perennial favorite among practitioners, many of whom describe it as their inspirational "bible" when it comes to better ideas on how to work with children in the therapeutic context (Mortola, in press). The degree to which her book has been embraced by practitioners worldwide is reflected in the remarkable diversity of languages into which the book has been translated: English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Serbo-Croatian, Croatian, Russian, Chinese, Hebrew, and German. Work is underway by international practitioners to translate the book into Korean and Czech as well.

As reported by many of those attending her summer programs, one of the unique aspects of *"Windows,"* which has made it a long-term favorite among practitioners, is the essentially experiential approach to working with children that Violet articulates. That is, while her approach to working with children and adolescents is clearly informed by Gestalt therapy theory and child development research, the text itself has a practical focus. Through many descriptions and examples in *"Windows,"* Violet provides vivid pictures of how a therapist can involve a child in hands-on therapeutic work with clay, puppets, drawings, musical instruments, sand tray toys, and a myriad of other creative materials. Her book offers practitioners a unique way of addressing the whole child in the therapeutic process—the child's body, senses, emotions, and thoughts—all of which help to build a contactful, authentic relationship in which to accomplish therapeutic work (Oaklander, 1999).

My eight years of participating in and helping her with summer programs provided the opportunity to study Violet's methods of teaching adults to do therapy with children and adolescents. One of the obvious findings is that Violet approaches her teaching of

adults in the same experiential manner and with the same high level of energy that she approaches her therapeutic work with children. Furthermore, this experiential aspect of teaching adults to become better child therapists—in which participants get their hands caked with clay and smeared with oil pastels—is in large part what makes her training programs and workshops popular with practitioners from around the world.

What follows is an overview of the ways in which Violet's approach to both adult education and child/adolescent therapy is richly experiential. I will also zoom in on one training exercise from her 2003 summer program in which she demonstrates her approach to working with children therapeutically by working with an adult volunteer from the group, using picture cards. Through presentation of the transcript and analysis of her work with the volunteer in this demonstration session, I will draw out and illuminate some of the rich lessons and meanings that adult practitioners are able to derive.

* * * * *

Violet tells participants in her training programs that in all therapeutic work with children and adolescents, "it's the experience that counts!" By this she means that it is therapeutic in and of itself for a child to gain a stronger sense of self through having rich experiences *with* the self. She describes how it is necessary for children to have a strong sense and experience of themselves—their emotions, their senses, their body, their thoughts—in order to be able to address and work through more difficult issues, such as trauma or abuse, in the therapeutic context.

Consequently, much of her work with children and adolescents in therapy looks deceptively simple and playful; for example, both she and the child laugh as they pinch, poke, or pound a pile of clay, or sit on the floor together, playfully talking as if they were the hand puppet they each hold. However, this kind of "self work," as Violet describes it, usually leads to a deeper level of both contact and support, not only between therapist and child, but also within the child. She believes it is from this foundational sense of self that the child gains the "self support" necessary to address the more challenging work of therapy.

These same ideas and values regarding the role of experience hold true for her approach to teaching adults to become better child and adolescent therapists. From the first day of each of her two-week summer programs, it is clear to the participants that they will not simply be sitting back in their chairs taking notes and collecting thoughts. In true Gestalt style, she starts out by involving them in "here and now" and "what and how" experiences, and being clear that she will be engaging with them in a manner similar to the way she works with children. In an upcoming book, I detail how each day of the training is informed and shaped by her firm belief that, "If you are going to work with children, you need to be willing to experience the same things you will ask them to do" (Mortola, in press).

Violet puts her philosophy of teaching and training into action by leading her students through the same therapeutic experiences she uses for children and adolescents in the therapeutic process. Moreover, the students engage in these experiences in roughly the same order as a child might in therapy. For example, on the second day

of each summer program, Violet leads the participants through the experience of fi imagining and then drawing a safe place in their lives. She then works with a stude volunteer in front of the group in much the same way she would work with a child therapy. Following her demonstration, she introduces them to working with each oth in pairs. Each person gets a chance to share and talk about the drawing they have cr ated, while being invited to "try on" some of the things they observed Violet doing a saying in the demonstration.

By the third and fourth days, participants engage in longer and more in-dep therapeutic experiences, such as "working with clay," and "the anger drawing." The more challenging therapeutic experiences reflect Violet's work with children to a dress deeper levels of emotional or psychological difficulty. Appropriately, in bo the therapeutic context with children and in the educational context with adults, the more challenging therapeutic experiences are introduced only after there are suppor in place—both internally and externally—that allow the child or adult to contain tl deeper level of emotional work reflected in the experiences. In accord with Gest theory and practice, the key to developing these supports lies largely in the experienti process.

As Violet's summer program progresses, it becomes clear that both her education work with adults and her therapeutic work with children become more challengir only after a supportive relationship is established between her and those involved, ar only after individuals involved gain a level of self support from earlier, less challengir activities. By the middle of the second week of the summer program, the participan will have experienced Violet's approach to working therapeutically with drawin clay, musical instruments, puppets, and sand tray toys. She first describes and the demonstrates her approach to using these materials therapeutically. The students the are provided with a structured learning experience with the materials in order to ga experience working as therapist and client, often with an observer at hand.

Violet consistently reminds the group, before they work with each other in pai and triads, that "this is training, not therapy," and that the focus of the work should b on helping the person in the role of the therapist increase her/his therapeutic skills ar experience. However, she also tells them that they will probably derive some person benefit through experiencing these various exercises as a child would. During certa experiences, participants are asked to "be themselves as a child between the ages of and 16" when they work in pairs and triads. Thus the participant increases not only th level of engagement in the process as a "client," but also the realism of the experienc as a "therapist." Students often report that these experiences help them address, an sometimes work through, a piece of unfinished business from their own childhood c adolescence (as evidenced in the demonstration presented later in this article).

All in all, during the two-week training program, participants spend more than ha of the fifty-five hours in experiential activities, practicing being a therapist, observin work being done, or taking on the role of a client. Given this intense focus on exper ence, it is reasonable to ask whether this approach to learning works for all partic pants. What about those who come grounded in a more cognitive or analytic approac to both therapy and learning? Surprisingly, while participants have critiqued differer

aspects of the summer intensives in interviews and written evaluations, most feedback has focused on environmental conditions—"Get better air-conditioning in the rooms"; "have fewer students in the program"—and not on their educational experience per se. I have not heard nor read any critique or feedback that compared Violet's educational model with either cognitive-behavioral or analytical models. In fact, comments about the experiential demands of the two-week course are rare and, when offered, have been positive. This may be owing to the manner in which participants come to learn about and sign up for Violet's programs. That is, although she advertises widely, participants tend to come based on word-of-mouth referrals from trusted friends and colleagues. Thus, most participants come to the programs not only familiar with Violet's writings, but also having a clear understanding of Violet's educational approach. Many, if not most, participants come to her with the expectation and hope that she *will* utilize her experiential model, knowing that if a picture is worth a thousand words, an experience is worth a thousand pictures. Participants who lean toward an experiential approach to therapy and learning appear to self select in applying her training programs.

A Training Demonstration Using Medicine Cards

On Wednesday of the second week, as participants prepare for an all-day practicum on Thursday, Violet introduces another specific approach for working therapeutically with children and adolescents. This method involves a deck of cards, called Medicine Cards (Sams & Carson, 1988), that portrays drawings of North American animals on each card. What follows is Violet's description and demonstration of the use of this particular visual medium which provides a good example of how she incorporates many levels of experience in both her therapeutic work with children and in her teaching with adults. This description, and the transcribed example provided, will demonstrate how Violet's students get to practice the kind of therapeutic work they will do with children, and how they learn from and make meaning of their personal experience while "in the client's seat."

In the course of this research, I have discovered that no matter what medium she happens to be using, Violet employs a similar set of steps in working with children and adolescents therapeutically. Usually the first prompt she gives a child client involves the use of imagination. Similarly, in the 2003 summer program, Violet gives a first prompt involving imagination to Liz, a young woman from Hong Kong who works as a bereavement counselor in a hospice organization. Volunteering to work in front of the group of twenty-four participants, Liz joins Violet on the floor and looks at the colorful cards spread in front of her. Violet begins with this: "I'd like you to pick three cards out of all these cards in front of you, Liz. Pick one animal card to represent who you have been in the past, one card to represent who you are now, and one card to represent who you would like to be in the future."

Having to think imaginatively and metaphorically in response to this prompt, Liz sorts through many of the cards before choosing three, each portraying a different animal—a porcupine, a whale, and a butterfly. She then lines them up in that order on the carpet in front of her. This act of silently engaging in the sensual qualities of the

cards—their look, their touch, their imaginative appeal—reflects a consistent secor component to Violet's approach. That is, after a prompt involving the imagination (*e.g.* "draw a safe place" or "create a scene in the sand," etc.), she then involves the child the process of physically making or representing something, thus incorporating at lea one tactile sensation and validating Gestalt therapy's theory that sensation is found tional to meaningful contact. This (usually silent) activity involves the child's sens and body in a creative and artistic process, resulting in some physical product—anoth seemingly simplistic example of how Gestalt therapy theory involves the moveme from sensation to awareness and then to action in order to have quality contact.

Though the product can range from a representation of the child's family in cl figures or a sand tray scene representing the child's real or imagined world, in t demonstration session with Liz, the product is simply three colorful cards that she h chosen, whose animal images represent some aspects of her own life.

The third consistent element of Violet's experiential approach involves the use metaphor and narrative. In the transcript below of her demonstration work with Li Violet asks Liz to tell her about the cards she has chosen. As is evident in the transcrip Liz can't help but speak metaphorically and narratively about her own experienc based on the three cards she chose to represent herself at different stages in her lif Please note that Violet's (V) "brief" responses to Liz (L) are bracketed in the transcri below. An ellipsis indicates a pause taken by the speaker.

V: Okay, so why don't you tell me a little bit about your choices….
L: Okay … how I used to be…. I picked a porcupine…. I was debating between porcupine or there was some type of wild cat that looked like it was really kind vicious and ferocious….
V: Hm, mmm….
L: But I picked a porcupine because I was really withdrawn as a child … and reall super sensitive to what was going on around me … constantly listening and reall trying to keep myself safe and protected … and I felt like this animal really ha that protection that I wanted growing up…. The porcupine … is by itself and it trying to protect itself and keep itself safe….
V: Right. And pretty prickly? Were you prickly? You know how a porcupine, yo don't want to touch it because it has these prickles….
L: I think I kept a real safe distance from other people….
V: Oh, okay, yeah, yeah….
L: I was a private person, real withdrawn. I would have times where I would be abl to be in a group of people and have a lot of fun. But I think overall I was … I wa prickly…. It was hard for people to get to know me….
V: Hm, mmm. Okay, tell me about the card for how you are now….
L: I feel like right now, I'm really enjoying being around other people and I picked whale. I had a chance to go up to Seattle last year and actually go whale watchin I loved it! I would see whales by themselves but then they would also be with group. So really having the freedom of independence but also having a real cor nection … a family….

V: Hm, mmm….
L: …When I think about right now … I feel more balanced with that [V:Yeah]. That I enjoy being alone but I also really enjoy being around other people [V:Yeah, yeah]. And I think the whale, too, when I got to see them, they would kind of go off by themselves and then they would be able to go back with the group [V:Yeah, yeah]. And so I'm enjoying that right now….
V: That's great. Now how about how you would like to be?
L: I picked a butterfly … I would like to be freer. I would like to … not have so many rules that I put on myself … so many, a lot of pressure … I am such a self critic and I feel like that is such a weight that just keeps me from … from flying into different areas … from doing a lot more….

Having watched Violet work with children, adolescents, and adults for the past eight years, I have come to appreciate a wonderful paradox that consistently emerges in her approach to therapy and teaching: I have seen many individuals working with her speak more openly and freely about themselves by talking about something other than themselves, projecting personal characteristics and attitudes onto an objective image. In this case, using the Medicine Cards, Liz offers many rich images, thoughts, and feelings about herself as she describes the characteristics of the animals she has chosen. It is hard to imagine Liz being quite so articulate and multidimensional in her descriptions of herself if the experience hadn't been mediated by the rich imagines and sensorial aspects of the cards.

This rich personal description that Liz offers is also linked to Violet's emphasis on the use of metaphor in her approach. Metaphor—from the Latin, "to ferry across"—seems to have a built-in capacity to help both children and adults borrow and make meaning from objects that are different from, but related to, the subject of concern. In Liz's case, the prickliness of the porcupine and the freer aspects of the butterfly seem to help her build a bridge of meaning from the images on the cards to her own personal experience as an individual developing over time.

This bridge of meaning that Liz is able to construct is a direct result of the type of language that metaphor requires and that Violet encourages. Unlike formal, conceptual, or abstract language, metaphoric language is necessarily closer to the world of imagination, emotion, and experience. Metaphor is a linguistic trope used to link something we already know about (a porcupine's "prickliness," for example) with something we are still trying to understand or make sense of (our experience of ourselves as children, for example). Thus, Violet's consistent use of metaphor in her approach to teaching and therapy allows and encourages those with whom she works to give a voice to and gain identification with parts of themselves that might otherwise be obscured or overlooked by a more formal type of language that emphasizes abstraction over experience.

The example with Liz demonstrates that Violet's approach to therapy usually contains a movement towards a more conceptual language in which she asks her client to reflect on the metaphors that have been expressed, and what meaning they might have in the client's life. However, this "sense making" prompt always follows the imaginative, experiential, and metaphoric explorations of the first three parts of her approach.

Often, the fourth prompt to "make sense" of the experiential components of the wo thus far comes in the form of a question, such as: "Does any of what we have spok about fit for you in you own life?" In the demonstration with Liz and the Medici Cards, the connections to Liz's personal life are obvious, having been established her descriptions of the characteristics she shared with animals on her chosen carc Next in their work together, Violet asks Liz a more reflective question that brings I back to the present and into an awareness of her present feelings:

V: Yeah … and what are you feeling now as you look at these?
L: Just looking at all the cards, I am seeing how much my life has changed and real just how different a porcupine and a whale are and just this idea that I'm real looking … and wanting to have that freedom, wanting to be that butterfly … I' very, very serious. And I think that the butterfly, it doesn't seem as serious.
V: And were you serious when you were young?
L: Very serious … and very adult-like…. Nothing child-like at all. My second-gra teacher had told my mom that I was one of the most intense little girls that she h ever seen. And just how I did things … this need to be very good at it very quickl I was really impatient … just a lot of pressure.

A kind of trademark question follows next in Violet's demonstration with Liz. Viol will often return to, or continue to build, the metaphoric or narrative world that tl client has started to create. In this instance with Liz, Violet asks her to "be" the anima she has chosen and talk as if she were those animals. Perhaps not surprisingly, give the emotionally-linked nature of metaphor, Liz experiences some deeply-felt emotio in the process:

V: So, Liz … if the butterfly could talk to the whale, what would butterfly say whale?
L: I wish you could be like me. I'm so free and I can go anywhere I want to. I can c anything.
V: Hmm…. And what does the whale say back?
L: I like it here right now. But I would like to have a different life. I would like to . be able to explore, be able to fly.
V: Hmm…. Is there anything else that you want to say to any of them? Or have ar of them say to each other?
L: Umm… (pausing, then speaking slowly) I … I think if the whale could talk wi the porcupine it would say … um … "You did the best you could." (voice quave ing)
V: (softly) I'm sure she did … yes … and that brings up emotion.
L: (nodding head, tearing up)
V: Yes, hmm? … Would you like to say something to her, too? I mean, the whale you, now, so anything else you want to say to her… (pointing at porcupine card
L: I guess, I see the porcupine … having such a tough shell to really protect i heart.

V: So tell her … how old is she? (pointing to porcupine card again).
L: Six.
V: Six. So tell her, "I know you were protecting…."
L: (voice full of emotion) I know that you have such a rough exterior because you're really trying to protect yourself. And to really hold on to being so sensitive and to really protecting your heart… (long pause).
V: And maybe you'd like to say that knowing that she's with you, and that you're with her now…
L: Uh huh.
V: …that it's okay to let that down sometimes, that you'll make sure she doesn't get hurt.
L: (Speaking to the porcupine card/six-year-old self) I will, I will protect you and I won't put you in a situation where it'll be unsafe. So you don't have to have all the quills up all the time.
V: (chuckles) Right.
L: (laughs)
V: I guess we'll stop now.
L: Okay.

From a Gestalt therapy perspective, Violet's use of imagination, sensory expression, and metaphoric articulation in her therapeutic approach all allow for and encourage the projective process to take place. In other words, Violet first encourages those with whom she works to project parts of themselves and their experience onto or into the imagined scenes and real materials at hand, in this case the animals depicted on the Medicine Cards. After exploring those projections through metaphoric language—their characteristics, identities, attitudes, and other aspects—she then encourages the student or client to "re-own" those projected parts of themselves, creating a deeper sense of personal integration and wholeness. At the start of their work together, Liz's description of her "prickliness" was related to a distant time in her life. By the end of her brief, eleven-minute demonstration session with Violet, Liz's feelings about that part of herself—and her ability to assume a nurturing stance toward herself and her "felt" imperfections—are much more immediate and part of her present experience.

"Self-nurturing work" is what Violet calls the type of work that emerged in her demonstration session with Liz. Violet considers this type of work, in which a younger, but still active, part of the self is engaged, accepted, and nurtured by a more developed part of the self, to be advanced therapeutic work. It is important to remember that this demonstration session took place eight days into the ten-day program, after a great deal of supportive groundwork had already been laid. This is an example of how Violet models ways she might move into deeper levels of therapeutic work over time with children and adolescents.

During a process discussion after the demonstration session (also an important aspect of Violet's teaching/learning model), Liz made it clear to the group what this experience provided as far as her personal development, and what it might mean for her future work with children. In response to a participant's appreciative comment about

the "butterfly-like freedom" that she allowed herself by the fact that she volunteer to come up in front of the group and do this piece of work with Violet, Liz respond this way:

L: Yeah, I've been waiting (laughter) … I wanted to come up and give myself t opportunity because I … through all the things that we've been doing this wee that theme has continued to come up … the sense of being so protective growi up and trying to learn to let my guard down and just trusting myself…. So I f my hand go up and I thought, "Okay, this is it."
V: (chuckling) All right, I'm so glad.
L: But I thought, there are so many different cards in there that there were seve choices I could have made … but … I really like these a lot. I think especially t kids that I work with … they connect so much with animals … I know I do.

These last comments show evidence that Violet's demonstration session with L accomplished two important learning goals that she has for her students. First, Liz r ceived a first-hand experience with the therapeutic materials, in this case the Medici Cards, as well as a first-hand experience with what the therapeutic process might l like from a child's point of view. Second, and just as important, Liz got in touch wi her own experience as a child and how that relates to the kind of person she is now. A stated earlier, Violet believes that it is important for her adult students to experience tl kinds of activities that therapists may ask a child to do in sessions. Additionally, sl urges her students to remember their own experiences as a child and, as in the examp with Liz, to literally open a dialogue with those younger, perhaps overlooked, par of themselves. This, again, is an example of one of the mainstays of Gestalt therap facilitating the completion of "unfinished business" through active, experiential inte ventions.

On the first day of the training, Violet's initial experiential activity was asking tl participants to close their eyes, see themselves as a child between the ages of 3 and 1 and then draw a scene using pastels and crayons that somehow depicted the image the saw. On the last Thursday of her 2003 program (the day after she worked with Liz the participants were asked to "be themselves as a child at some particular age" durir a forty-five-minute practice therapy session with two other students acting as therapi and observer. These components of the training, in which participants are asked t engage and experience their younger selves, reflect a deep value held by Violet. A she tells her trainees, she believes that her memory of herself as a child, as well as h present experience of her younger self, help guide her moment-to-moment decisio making in the sensitive work of doing therapy with children and adolescents.

Thus we see that encouraging participants to experience themselves as they wer when a child is one more layer of experience that Violet facilitates when teachin adults to do therapeutic work with children and adolescents. In the next section, will highlight some emergent themes and offer conclusions regarding the Oaklande approach to teaching child psychotherapists.

Emergent Themes and Conclusions

In this article, I have described several ways in which Violet Oaklander's experience-based adult training parallels her approach to working therapeutically with children and adolescents. These parallels include: 1) her hands-on approach to both teaching and therapy; 2) the way she leads adult students through the same exercises as children and adolescents experience in therapy; and 3) the way she begins both therapy and training with less challenging activities before moving into deeper work as relationship and support are established.

In addition, I have identified three themes in her work that underscore the importance of her approaches to both therapy and teaching. First, her approach to therapy with children and adolescents is a model of a developmentally-appropriate practice. In her approach, she meets children where they are developmentally—building on the strengths of childhood—before helping them move toward their next developmental stage. Specifically, she begins her therapeutic work with children by engaging them in some of the earliest skills of childhood (imagination, sensation, metaphor, and narrative) before encouraging them to use the more developed and conceptual aspects of spoken language to help them make sense of their experience. In other words, she helps children gain self-support and confidence within their present capabilities and experience before offering them more challenging tasks or activities.

Second, although it may not be obvious at first glance, she also practices developmentally appropriate principles for adults in her two-week summer programs. Werner (1957) uses the term "microgenesis" to describe the process by which adults tackle a new problem or learning situation. Werner describes how, in learning a new skill, adults move through a period of vague impressions fused with feelings and bodily sensations before they are able to arrive at any level of conceptual understanding and competence in the new skill area. Too often, it seems, we forget that adults go through this process, focusing instead on only the cognitive and abstract aspects of learning in adult education contexts. Violet, on the other hand, incorporates (a word that literally translates from the Latin as "into the body") levels of experience in her teaching that facilitate adult learning and allow adults to integrate what they have learned into their "whole selves"—their bodies, senses, emotions, and thoughts.

Finally, I return to my original question in the Introduction: What is it about Violet's programs that appeals to so many individuals from so many countries around the world? As part of my observation and analysis of her approach to the training and education of adults (including a visit with her to South Africa where she was invited to present in three cities), I explored this question with numerous international participants. Their responses have been clear and consistent: Violet Oaklander's approaches to both teaching and therapy apply to so many diverse settings because she draws upon universally shared aspects of both child development and basic childhood experience. Musical instruments, drawings, clay work, puppets, sand and miniature figurines, interesting images of animals—all these are fundamental and ancient modes of human expression, and all are used by children in nearly every culture around the globe. In addition, as noted earlier, Violet places primary importance on the role of imagination, sensation,

metaphor, and narrative in her teaching of adults, just as she does in her therapeu work with children and adolescents. Through cross-cultural and developmental stu ies, we know that each of these fundamental, defining human attributes are among t earliest strengths of children, across time and around the world (Brown, 1991; Cole Cole, 1989).

In conclusion, It is important to acknowledge that for more than thirty years a in three significant capacities—as practitioner, author, and teacher—Violet Oakland has served as a bridge among the worlds of Gestalt therapy theory, child-developme theory, child therapy, and the educating of adult therapists. In each of her profession capacities, she has held the banner high for a central and shared quality among the varied disciplines: "It's the experience that counts!"

Peter Mortola, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Counseling and School Psychology
Graduate School of Education and Counseling
Lewis and Clark College
Campus Box 86, Portland, Oregon 97219-7899
pmortola@lclark.edu

REFERENCES

Brown, D. E. (1991), *Human Universals*. New York: Mcgraw-Hill, Inc.

Brown, G. I. (1971), *Human Teaching for Human Learning: An Introduction to Confluent Education*. New York: Viking.

Cole, M. & Cole, S. (1989), *The Development of Children,* second edition. New Yorl Scientific American Books.

Latner, J. (1973), *The Gestalt Therapy Book: A Holistic Guide to the Theories, Principles, and Techniques of Gestalt Therapy Developed by Frederick S. Perls and Others*. New York: The Gestalt Journal.

Mortola, P. (in press), *Windowframes: The Oaklander Approach to Training Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists*. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press/GestaltPress.

Oaklander, V. (1978), *Windows to Our Children: A Gestalt Therapy Approach to Children and Adolescents*. Highland, NY: The Gestalt Journal Press.

_____ (1999), Group play therapy from a Gestalt perspective. In: *The Handbook of Group Play Therapy: How To Do It, How It Works, Whom It's Best For*, D. Sweeney and L. Homeyer, (eds.). Jossey-Bass Publishers, New York, p. 163.

Perls, F., Hefferline, R., & Goodman, P. (1951), *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality*. New York: Dell Publishing Company.

Polster, E. & Polster, M. (1973), *Gestalt Therapy Integrated: Contours of Theory anc Practice*. New York: Vintage Books.

Sams, J. & Carson, D. (1988), *Medicine Cards: The Discovery of Power through the Ways of Animals*. Santa Fe, NM: Bear and Company.

Werner, H. (1957), The concept of development from a comparative and organismic point of view. In: *The Concept of Development,* D. B. Harris (ed.), Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, p. 145.

Wheeler, G. (1991), *Gestalt Reconsidered: A New Approach to Contact and Resistance*. Cambridge, MA: The Gestalt Institute of Cleveland Press.

Woldt, A. L. & Toman, S. M. (2005), Gestalt pedagogy: Creating the field for teaching and learning. In: *Gestalt Therapy: History, Theory, and Practice*, A. Woldt & S. Toman (eds.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. xv-xxvii.