

Gestalt therapy

– different actors' practice and experience

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Background

Gestalt therapy is one of the most widely used alternative psychotherapeutic treatments in Norway as well as in other western societies. Gestalt therapy is included in WHO's definition of alternative medicine. In Norway the therapy is not officially approved or integrated into the official treatment system. Research shows positive outcomes of gestalt therapy, but little is known about the clinical field and the different actors' experiences.

Objective

The aims of the project are:

- 1) to examine who the clients of gestalt therapists are and whether the clients previously have been in contact with the health system concerning the problem they address to the gestalt therapists,
- 2) to describe the clients' experiences with the gestalt therapy compared to the conventional treatment,
- 3) whether learning taking place in the therapeutic room can be transferred to the clients' everyday contexts,
- 4) to describe the therapists practice profiles (what kind of practice, size, type of clients, etc.) and
- 5) to describe experiences from existing cooperation/collaborations between gestalt therapists and medical doctors.

Materials and Methods

Both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative methods will be used (case studies). The surveys will be used to get a basic and broad knowledge about the clinical field of gestalt therapy, case studies will be used to collect the experiences from clients, therapists and doctors related to the different settings of these actors (Figure 1).

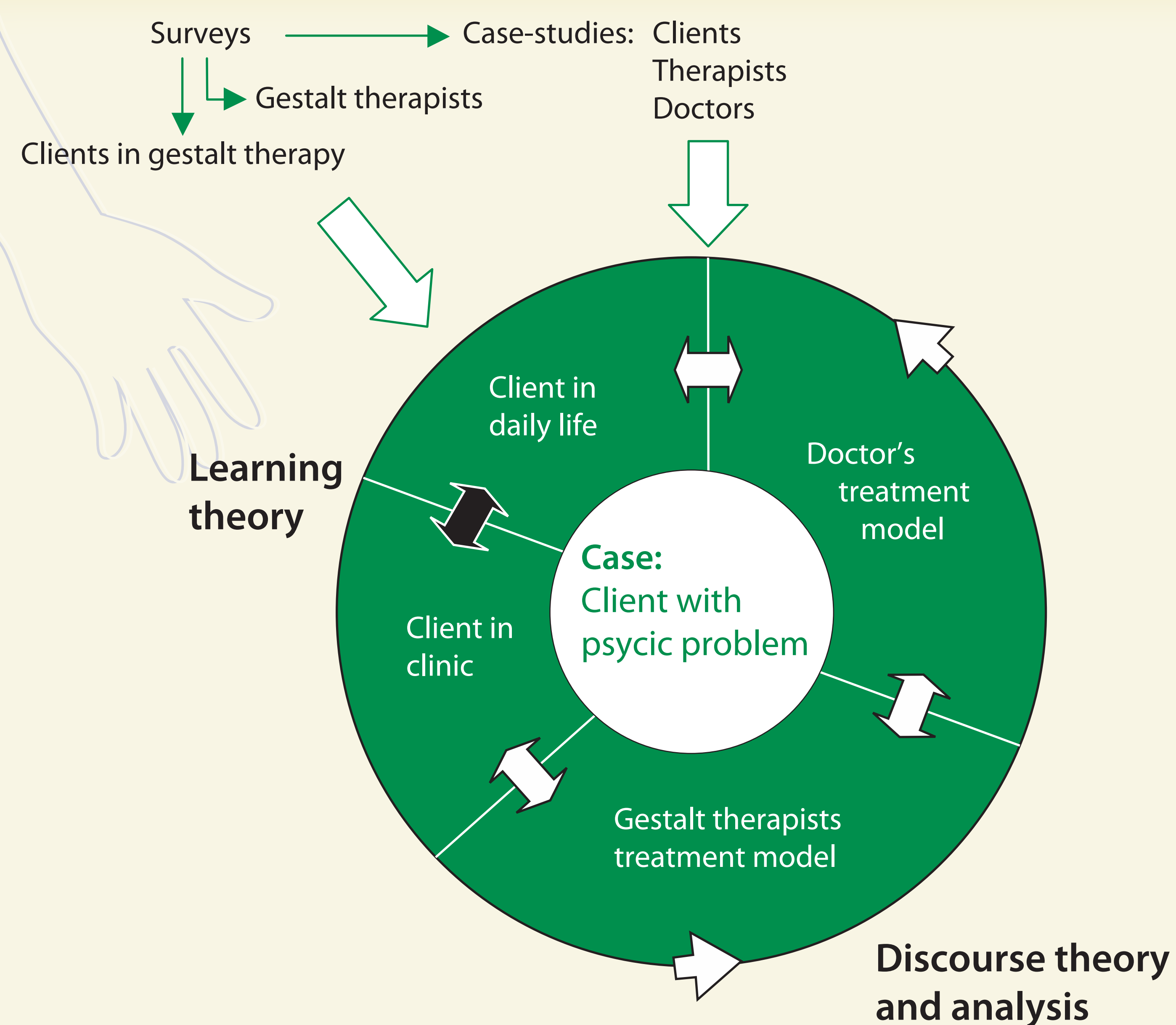


Figure 1. Surveys and case studies will give information about the clients' experiences in the two different contexts, clinic and daily life, and knowledge about whether learning taking place in the therapeutic room can be transferred to the clients' everyday contexts. The black arrow illustrates the different contexts between which the client switches. The white arrows illustrate possible communication, information and cooperation between the clients, therapists and medical doctors. Possible theories to be used are learning and discourse theories.

Conclusion

In addition to generating a knowledge of the clients and the health problems they address to gestalt therapists this project can give profound knowledge about experiences with gestalt therapy both from the clients', the therapists' and the doctors' viewpoints. The research results might generate hypotheses and forms a starting point for important research projects in mental health and alternative treatments.