The Effects of Experiential-Gestalt Growth Groups on a Measure of Self-Acceptance & Acceptance of Others

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THE EFFECTS OF EXPERIENTIAL-GESTALT
GROWTH GROUPS ON A MEASURE OF SELF-ACCEPTANCE
AND ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS

A Thesis
Presented to
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of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Danny C. Brown
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THE EFFECTS OF EXPERIENTIAL-GESTALT
GROWTH GROUPS ON A MEASURE OF SELF-ACCEPTANCE
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THE EFFECTS OF EXPERIENTIAL-GESTALT GROWTH GROUPS ON A MEASURE OF SELF-ACCEPTANCE AND ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS

Danny C. Brown April 1975 48 pages

Directed by: Carl Martray, Ernest Owen, and James Craig

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Two experiential-Gestalt oriented growth groups were conducted with the purpose of determining the effects such a group process has in increasing an individual's acceptance of himself and others. The sample included 26 students who had volunteered to participate in a growth group experience. Ten volunteers were assigned to a control group while the remaining 16 volunteers were evenly divided into two growth groups. Experiential groups met for two hours once a week for eight weeks. Focus of the groups was primarily on the moment to moment experiencing of individual participants and the interaction among them. In order to assess the hypothesized increases in group participants' levels of self-acceptance and acceptance of others the measure of Expressed Acceptance of Self and Expressed Acceptance of Others was used. Although significant differences were found over time, there were no significant differences between the control and experimental groups in the degree in which their acceptance of self and others increased.
Introduction

Self-acceptance and acceptance of others have been considered necessary components in the development and growth of self-actualizing individuals (Maslow, 1968; Wylie, 1961). Among the methods used to facilitate such self and other acceptance the group experience has been found to be one of the most effective. Research dealing with changes in levels of self-acceptance (SA) and acceptance of others (AO) of group participants has typically been confined, however, to studies dealing exclusively with the sensitivity or T-group experience (King, Payne, & McIntire, 1973; McIntire, 1973; Campbell & Dunnette, 1968; Seashore, 1969). The findings of these studies are in general agreement in that with expanded awareness of self and others increases in SA and AO follow. Expanded awareness of self and others is also the goal of the experiential-Gestalt growth group experience (Foulds, 1972). Accordingly, it is seen as a potentially useful and effective method in facilitating healthy acceptance of self and others in its participants (Foulds, 1972, 1973).

The experiential-Gestalt growth group is an outgrowth of the humanistic-existential conceptualization of man formulated by Perls in his development of Gestalt therapy (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951). The humanistic-existential
conceptualization places a great deal of emphasis on the here-
and-now, moment to moment experiencing of individual partici-
pants and their confrontation with self and others. There
are no artificial demarcations drawn between mind and body
in the experiential-Gestalt growth group. Rather, a truly
holistic approach is taken that emphasizes awareness of
organismic action and reaction with regard to the ongoing
moment to moment experiencing of the individual organism.
It is a fundamental premise of Gestalt therapy, and thus of
the experiential-Gestalt growth group, that it is healthy
for human beings "to be" what is intrinsic to them. To be
human is to live according to what one is. To be what one
is involves an acceptance of the self. Latner (1974), a
Gestalt therapist referring to the goals of Gestalt therapy,
stated:

"Therapy is the process of learning to embrace our-
self. In it we try to replace our dreams and
fantasies of living with total organismic function-
ing. To do that, we begin by embracing our present
situation, difficult as that may be. In therapy,
we face the facts of our lives that we have hidden
from ourself. The task is to help us accept our-
self [p. 155]."

Although the experiential-Gestalt growth group should
not be confused with Gestalt therapy, which deals with indi-
viduals experiencing distress of varying degrees, the goal
of the "growth" group is essentially the same as it is for
Gestalt therapy. Both can be viewed as "therapy" in the
sense that the objective is the integration of the individual
self with his total organismic existence in the world. The
primary difference between the "growth" group and the "therapy"
The experiential-Gestalt growth group is usually composed of relatively well-functioning individuals who are simply seeking psychological development of their human potential (Foulds, 1972). The goal is still the same: an integration of and acceptance of the self with one's experiencing.

The process of therapy then, be it defined in its orthodox context or in the "growth-seeking" context, is the process of expanding or increasing awareness of the self. This increased awareness naturally involves an acceptance of the self and organismic self-regulation (Perls et al., 1951). Organismic self-regulation is the term Perls used to describe the organism's natural drive for homeostasis, i.e. a "balanced" individual. Through increased awareness of self the individual is able to develop a greater harmony between his needs and behavior. By attending to his organismic experiencing the group member is able to differentiate between his real needs and the introjected needs and demands that society and significant others attempt to place on him. It is through the attending to and acceptance of the organismic/holistic self that the individual grows and develops his human potential and is able to direct his behavior toward the satisfaction of psychological as well as physiological needs.

The experiential-Gestalt growth group provides the opportunity for individuals to:

. . . experience themselves more fully and to engage in authentic encounter and confrontation with self and each other as a method of self-discovery and release of human potential through expanded awareness [Foulds, 1972, p. 48].
Participants are encouraged to stay in their "awareness continuum" in order to discover and become more aware of their ongoing moment to moment experience. By doing this participants may regain the spontaneity of their true self which was formerly hampered and blocked through self-manipulative avoidance techniques (Shostrom, 1967). In essence, the group member is helped to accept himself and to reject any introjected self-image or packaged set of needs. Through increased awareness and acceptance of self the individual is able to accept others more fully for what they are and learns to respect other people's own phenomenological experiencing.

Although the experiential-Gestalt growth group is seen as a potentially effective method in increasing the levels of SA and AO in its participants, the majority of research dealing with changes in SA and AO as a result of group experience is primarily associated with sensitivity group processes. There is an apparent lack of meaningful literature that deals specifically with the experiential-Gestalt group's effect upon individual levels of SA and AO. Although a few studies have been located which deal with attitudinal changes toward self and others (Foulds, 1970, 1973; Guinan, Foulds, & Wright, 1973) as a result of the Gestalt group experience, these studies have not dealt specifically with the variables of SA or AO.

It would then seem that research designed to deal with experiential-Gestalt group processes and their effects upon SA and AO is needed. The present study was an attempt to
correct that need. By using scales of Expressed SA and Expressed AO (Berger, 1952) the following hypotheses were tested:

a. The level of SA, as measured by Berger's scale for Expressed SA, will increase in a significantly more positive direction in individuals participating in experiential-Gestalt growth groups than it will in those individuals not participating in the growth groups.

b. The level of AO, as measured by Berger's scale of Expressed AO, will increase significantly more in individuals participating in the growth groups than it will in those individuals not participating in the growth groups.
Review of the Literature

Abraham Maslow (1968) has stated that even though self-actualization has been defined in various ways, there has been one common element on which these definitions agree—the acceptance of self. Self-acceptance and its important relationship to the actualizing individual is not unique to Maslow's theory. Rogers (1961) stated that while self-actualization and SA are not equivalent, SA is a prime component of the actualizing person and without SA there can be no self-actualization.

Closely related to SA is AO. Combs and Snygg (1959), in their perceptual theory of personality, stated that the self-actualizing individual views himself and others in a positive manner and is highly accepting of himself and others. Essentially, because the actualizing person is able to accept himself for what he is, he is able to accept others for what they are (Goble, 1971). Rogers (1951) has proposed that an individual's attitudes toward others is greatly determined by his attitudes toward himself and that one's ability to accept others would depend on that individual's acceptance of himself. Similarly, Horney (1937) had theorized that the person who did not believe himself lovable would not be able to love others. Along the same line, Fromm (1947) suggested
that one who hates himself would inevitably hate others and that only the person with genuine "self-love" would be capable of a mature love for another.

Sheerer (1949), a student of Rogers, supplied the first experimental verification of the positive relationship between SA and AO by having a panel of judges analyze and rate ten clients' statements concerning self and others. By analyzing changes in statements made by clients during counseling, Sheerer found that a client's SA could be significantly altered by the client-centered therapeutic process and that an individual's evaluation of others was significantly related to his attitudes toward himself. Using the Pearson product-moment coefficient she found correlations between SA and AO in the +.50's and +.60's. Stock (1949), another student of Rogers, confirmed Sheerer's results by having a panel of judges rate interviews with clients for overall attitudes toward self and others. She found correlations of +.38 and +.66 between SA and AO. Both Sheerer and Stock's findings suggest that as an individual grows more accepting of himself during therapy he also becomes more accepting of others.

Using the criterion developed by Sheerer (1949) Berger (1952) constructed scales to measure expressed SA and AO. These scales were administered to 216 college students, 45 people with speech problems, 18 adults in a class at the YMCA, three counselees, and 33 prisoners. He found correlations between SA and AO ranging from +.36 to +.69. These correlations were significant beyond the .01 level of confidence (p=.006 or
less) with the exception of the YMCA group (p=.06). Thus
Berger's findings lend support to the theory that there is
a significant relationship between SA and AO. In a follow-
up psychometric study of Berger's two scales this experimenter
obtained a correlation of +.47 between SA and AO in 47 college
students, supporting Berger's results.

Another measure of SA and its relationship to AO is a
questionnaire developed by Phillips (1951), again using the
criterion descriptions developed by Sheerer. The measure
has 50 items with half the items referring to self-attitudes
and the other half referring to attitudes toward others. The
correlation of SA with AO on the questionnaire was +.74 with
a sample of older college students. A sample of younger
college students had a correlation of +.54 and was consistent
with the findings of Berger (1952) that a closer relationship
between SA and AO existed in older individuals than in
younger individuals. Using the Phillips questionnaire McIntyre
(1952) also found a significant correlation between SA and
AO of +.46 in his sample of 112 college students. Fey (1954)
found similar results using a test to measure SA, AO, and
their relationship to therapy-readiness. He found a positive
correlation of .40 at the .01 confidence level between SA and
AO in 60 freshmen medical students.

Omwake (1954) furnished more empirical evidence that
there is a significant relationship between SA and AO by using
three different personality inventories to measure that rela-
tionship. These measures were the scales developed by Berger
(1952), the Phillips (1951) questionnaire, and the Index of
Adjustment and Values developed by Bills, Vance, and McLean (1954). Omwake found a significant correlation of +.73 between SA responses and a correlation of +.60 for the AO responses. Her results indicated a significant relationship between the way an individual sees himself and the way he sees others. Her study also suggested that those who reject themselves tend to reject others and perceive others as being self-rejectant.

In a review of the literature concerned with the relationship between SA and AO Wylie (1961) reported that SA and AO were positively related. However, in investigating the nature of the relationship between self-evaluation and other evaluation in client-centered therapy Rosenman (1955) concluded that successfully treated clients saw themselves as acting more positively toward others while continuing to evaluate others in a predominantly negative manner. Thus the Rosenman study came to the opposite conclusion held by the majority of research and indicated that as SA increases AO does not necessarily change in a positive direction. Further empirical evidence that such a negative correlation exists has not been found. Suinn (1964) did find that anxiety had a disruptive yet systematic influence on the SA-AO relationship in 92 subjects. By administering tests of general and test anxiety with an SA-AO questionnaire Suinn found that anxiety lowered an individual's SA by a greater rate than AO and that low anxiety permitted the usual SA-AO correlation to exist.

Change in SA and AO has also been explored as a function of group experience. McCann (1956) demonstrated that SA
increased with successful client-centered group psychotherapy. He found that by using an acceptant group atmosphere individuals did not feel a need to protect their self-concepts through defenses, leading to an increase in SA. He also found an increase in statements of AO. Using the Index of Adjustment and Values (Bills et al., 1954) with 126 experimental subjects and 36 control subjects Rutan (1971) found a significant correlation between increased trust and increased SA in small groups during a 15 week period. He also found that individuals participating in small groups demonstrated significantly more SA than did persons not in small groups.

Sensitivity training has also been shown to facilitate increased levels of SA and AO among group members (Bunker, 1965; Gordon, 1950). This sort of training was also the group method used by Rubin (1967a) in investigating the relationship between changes in SA and ethnic prejudice. On the basis of pre- and posttesting of 50 subjects, using the Dorris, Levinson, and Haufman (1954) Sentence Completion Test, it was shown that over a period of two weeks significant increases in SA and decreases in prejudice resulted from sensitivity training. It was also shown that a positive relationship existed between changes in SA and changes in prejudice. Using the same data Rubin (1967b) attempted to test the hypothesis that sensitivity training would increase SA and AO. Acceptance of others was defined as the affective components of an individual's attitudes toward different ethnic groups and was measured by a 15 item scale of "human-heartedness" (H-H).
Rubin defined H-H as that which "enjoins a person's emotional acceptance of others in terms of their common humanity, no matter how different they may seem from oneself [p. 33]." Unfortunately, by his definition of H-H and AO it would seem that Rubin was again measuring changes in ethnic prejudice rather than AO in general. Although H-H could be considered a component of prejudice, and ethnic prejudice could certainly be considered a factor or component of AO, Rubin did not take into consideration acceptance of those individuals of the same ethnic background or acceptance of others in general. The term "prejudice" in the context used by Rubin is not interchangeable with AO. Therefore it would seem that despite significant findings the results of Rubin's two studies only partially support the hypothesis that AO increases as a result of participation in sensitivity training.

Research with sensitivity training has, however, indicated that both SA and AO are increased by the use of this group approach. Seashore (1969) and Campbell and Dunnette (1968) have found that T-group experiences offer an experiential base which may increase self-understanding as well as understanding of others. Scher (1955), using Berger's (1952) scales of Expressed SA and AO in studying group attitudes related to expressed acceptance of self and others, found a positive correlation between expressed SA and perceived acceptance of self by the group. He also found a positive relationship between expressed AO and perceived SA of self by the group. In examining the process and outcome of
encounter groups Insel and Moors (1972) found that experimental subjects significantly changed self-ratings to more self-accepting and tended to be more acceptant of others. Similarly, Hewitt and Kraft (1973) found that subjects participated in encounter groups improved in self-liking and in their ability to relate to others. Although the labels "sensitivity group" and "encounter group" are generally thought to be indicative of qualitative differences between approaches to group interaction, it has been demonstrated that the differences are more semantic than actual (Lieberman, Yalom, & Miles, 1972). In the present review of the literature both sensitivity and encounter group approaches are therefore used synonymously.

Perhaps the most thorough investigation into the effects of sensitivity training on SA is the study by King, Payne, and McIntire (1973), in which both marathon sensitivity groups and "prolonged" sensitivity groups were compared with regard to their effects on SA. The sample was composed of 57 participants in six sensitivity training groups. These subjects ranged from freshmen to middle-aged individuals holding advanced degrees. Also tested were 18 undergraduates who were divided into two control groups. Three groups were assigned to three separate marathon sensitivity sessions lasting approximately 24 hours, while the remaining three experimental groups were assigned to "prolonged" sensitivity training lasting for three to four hours once a week for 14 weeks. Based on pre- and posttesting, using a measure of SA.
developed by Lesser (Holzberg, Gewirtz, & Ebner, 1964), it was found that all six sensitivity groups showed significant changes toward SA, with the marathon group showing the greatest increases at the .01 confidence level. Changes were thought to result from participants discovering that "... their inadequacies, both real and imagined, are not unique and that even persons they admire share many of their 'hanp-ups' [p. 421]." On the basis of their findings they hypothesized that members became more self-acceptant when they were still accepted by the group even when their shortcomings became common knowledge inside the group. Despite the shortcomings of an inadequate control population the results of the King et al. study are indicative of the facilitative nature sensitivity training has in increasing SA.

Further empirical evidence of the sensitivity group's effectiveness in increasing SA among its participants (and therefore theoretically increasing AO) was supplied by McIntire (1973). Using 67 subjects meeting graduate admissions requirements for the University of Connecticut McIntire found that as a result of T-group experience students increased significantly in their level of SA as measured by the Personal Orientation Inventory (Shostrom, 1964). In order to determine the stability of the changes made he readministered the Personal Orientation Inventory to the same subjects one year later. Results of the second posttest indicated that the changes in SA were stable.

Facilitative experiences used to develop and increase levels of SA and AO in group members are not unique to the
sensitivity approach however. Self-acceptance is also an integral component of Gestalt therapy's formulation of the actualizing person and is therefore important in experiential-Gestalt growth groups (Foulds, 1972; Latner, 1974). In an article that describes the content and goals of the experiential-Gestalt growth group Foulds (1972) pointed out that it is through the manipulation of self and environment (others) that one fails to develop his human potential, for he is not willing or able to accept himself for what he is. Foulds goes on to say, "Myself (I) can grow and change only if I 'own' me, and take full responsibility for me. Then change occurs automatically [p. 49]." The goal of the Gestalt-oriented group experience is "... to foster more whole, fully integrated, real, and authentic persons who are willing to accept themselves and take responsibility for their lives (Foulds, 1972, p. 52)."

Using semantic differential rating scales developed by Girona (1969) Foulds, Girona, and Guinan (1970) attempted to determine how the experiential-Gestalt oriented group affects perception of self and others in participants of a 24-hour group marathon. Group members, composed of 16 college students seeking personal growth, were encouraged to explore and express "here-and-now" feelings of self and other group members. Participants were also encouraged to:

... help one another to expand awareness of inner experiencing and of verbal and nonverbal communications, to discover ways in which their intended helpfulness sometimes inhibits growth in another person, to become aware of their manipulative behaviors and incongruent communications, and to develop behavioral flexibility [p. 352].
The findings of Foulds et al. (1970) indicate that as a result of participation in a Gestalt-oriented marathon group, significant positive changes occurred in ratings of self and others when compared to pre- and posttesting of 18 control subjects. Although Foulds et al. did not concern themselves with the variables of SA and AO explicitly, their results are indicative of the facilitative effect the experiential-Gestalt growth group has in increasing SA and AO. A follow-up study by Guinan, Foulds, and Wright (1973) found that the most frequently reported changes in subjects, following a six month interval between the end of the marathon group and an interview, was increased SA followed by increased trust and understanding of others. Foulds (1973) also reported very similar results using a "prolonged" experiential-Gestalt growth group that met once a week for six weeks at four hours per session, equaling the total group time spent (24 hours) in the marathon group studies. Using 28 college students, half experimental and half control, it was found that group members perceived themselves and others in a significantly more positive manner. In his study Foulds used the Affect Scale (Girona, 1969) previously employed in the marathon Gestalt group studies (Foulds et al., 1970; Guinan et al., 1973). The Affect Scale is a self-report instrument that purports to measure attitudes toward "Myself" and "Others" using the principles of semantic differentials. However, it is difficult to determine if increased SA or increased AO can be inferred from this instrument, as it deals with general attitudes and not SA or AO specifically.
Foulds (1970) has offered further indications that Gestalt-oriented groups are effective in increasing group members' SA and AO. In evaluating the effectiveness of a Gestalt group that met nine times for four hours per session, Foulds found that SA increased in a significantly positive direction. Using Shostrom's (1964) Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) with 20 experimental subjects and 20 controls, the SA scale made the second most statistically significant increase out of the 12 POI scales, following only the significant increases in the "capacity for intimate contact." Interestingly enough, the SA scale was one of only two POI scales that were measured as being lower on the pretest for experimentals than for controls. In addition, the significant increases in "capacity for intimate contact" may be interpreted to infer increases in AO.

Inferences are, however, not enough. There is an apparent lack of meaningful research dealing explicitly with both the variables of SA and AO in the context of participation in experiential-Gestalt growth groups. Research that has been completed in terms of experiential-Gestalt growth groups and attitudinal changes has either been done with groups using a measure of general attitudes (Foulds et al., 1970; Foulds, 1973; Guinan et al., 1973) or has not specifically concerned itself with changes in AO and their relationship to changes in SA (Foulds, 1970). Although positive changes in these acceptance variables may be inferred from past research using experiential-Gestalt growth groups, empirical verification of
these changes is required. It is believed that by using Berger's scales of Expressed SA and Expressed AO (1952) these inferred changes in acceptance of self and others may be empirically verified.
Method

Subjects

Twenty-six volunteer subjects, consisting of college freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students at Western Kentucky University, were solicited by reading a short description of the goals of the experiential-Gestalt growth group to students taking psychology courses and by distributing handouts announcing the forming of "awareness groups" (See Appendix A). A general meeting for potential volunteers was held in which issues of confidentiality, responsibilities of group members and leaders, techniques, and group goals were discussed. It was emphasized that these would be "growth" groups and not "therapy" groups, and no student currently being seen for counseling was allowed to participate (See Appendix B).

For comparison purposes 16 volunteers were assigned to experiential-Gestalt groups while the remaining 10 subjects served as controls. The experimental subjects were divided into two equal groups based on their class schedules and availability of the two group leaders.

Instrument

Description. The measure of Expressed Acceptance of Self and Expressed Acceptance of Others (Berger, 1952) is composed...
of two scales, one to measure attitudes toward the self and one to measure attitudes toward others. Berger abridged and slightly modified the criterion descriptions of SA and AO developed by Sheerer (1949) and incorporated them into the total test measure using four test items for each defined element of SA and AO (See Appendix C). Thus the SA scale is made up of 36 items measuring the nine criterion definitions of SA and 28 items measuring the seven criterion definitions of AO. The items of both scales are randomly intermixed in the test format rather than having two distinct sections.

A Likert-type procedure for responding is used requiring the examinee to answer each of the 64 items by circling one of the following alternatives: "A" for "not at all true of myself," "B" for "slightly true of myself," "C" for "about halfway true of myself," "D" for "mostly true of myself," or "E" for "true of myself."

**Scoring and analysis.** The score for any item ranges from one to five, according to which letter the examinee circles for that particular item. The letter "A" is worth five points, "B" is worth four points, and so on down to "E" which is worth one point. The direction of scoring is reversed for positively worded items. After this adjustment has been made the SA scale score is computed by simply summing the item scores on that scale. The AO score is obtained in an analogous manner. Thus the instrument provides two separate scores representing either SA or AO. Possible scores range from 36 (points) to 180 for the SA scale and from 28 to 140
on the AO scale. A high score indicates a favorable attitude toward self or others.

**Validity and reliability.** In testing the validity of his instrument Berger (1952) found a correlation of +.897 and +.727 for the SA and AO scales, respectively. In determining the test's validity he used a group of 20 subjects to write about their attitudes toward themselves and another group (N=20) to write about their attitudes toward others. These reports were then rated by a panel of judges and the mean ratings were correlated with the corresponding test scores.

Berger obtained split-half reliabilities of +.894 or better for the SA scale and +.776 to +.884 for the AO scale. Using 47 college students at Western Kentucky University this experimenter obtained split-half reliabilities of +.848 for the SA scale and +.52 for the AO scale using the Pearson product-moment coefficient. Test-retest reliability coefficients of +.86 for the SA scale and +.91 for the AO scale were also obtained by this experimenter using a 30 day interval between pre- and posttesting. Results of the validity and reliability studies indicate that the SA-AO measure provides a fairly accurate and stable estimate of acceptance of self and others.

**Design**

A split-plot design was employed in order to assess the quantifiable differences between groups as well as the differences between pre- and posttest scores. Because each growth group must be considered unique as a function of the interaction
between unique individuals, a consideration of the differ-
ential effects of "group uniqueness" were considered necessary
in the analysis and interpretation of test scores.

Two independent variables were investigated in this
study. One was the effect of time and may be operationally
defined as a nine-week interval between pre- and posttesting.
The second independent variable was the experiential-Gestalt
group process. This process may be operationally defined as
a group of eight or more individuals seeking personal growth
and one group leader who met once a week for two hours for
eight consecutive weeks. Focus of the group was primarily on
the "... 'here-and-now' moment to moment experiencing of
individual participants and the interaction among them
(Foulds, 1972, p. 48)." Three levels of the group process
independent variable were used. These levels consisted of:
(1) group A led by group leader A; (2) group B led by group
leader B; and (3) a control group not receiving experiential-
Gestalt group treatment. Groups A and B were considered as
two separate levels of the group process variable because of
inherent "group uniqueness."

The dependent variables measured were the levels of SA
and AO as determined by pre- and posttesting on the test for
Expressed Acceptance of Self and Expressed Acceptance of
Others (Berger, 1952). Changes in the dependent variables
were measured by changes in scale scores.

Procedure

Test administration. The experimenter administered the
SA-AO pretest to each student volunteer at the general meeting
held in which subjects were assigned to groups. Instructions were printed on the test itself and were read to the subjects as follows:

This is a study of some of your attitudes. Of course, there is no right answer for any statement. The best answer is what you feel is true of yourself. An answer sheet is provided for your responses. Do not make any marks on the questionnaire.

1. Enter your name on the first line of the answer sheet.
2. Indicate the date on the second line. Circle the letter indicating your year in school (1=freshman . . . 5=graduate).
3. You are to respond to each question on the answer sheet according to the following scheme: A—not at all true of myself; B—slightly true of myself; C—about halfway true of myself; D—mostly true of myself; E—true of myself.
4. Record your responses on the answer sheet by circling the letter that best represents how you feel about each statement. Remember, the best answer is the one which applies to you.

The posttest was administered in the same way to all 26 volunteers one day following the last experiential-Gestalt group session—a period of nine weeks following pretest administration.

**Group procedure.** In order to keep the experiential groups as similar as possible (an admittedly difficult task) for research purposes specific techniques and Gestalt-oriented exercises were utilized at the beginning of each session of the two groups. These techniques and exercises consisted of sensory awareness exercises, psychodrama, nonverbal exercises, Gestalt awareness training, fantasy trips, and psychomotor experiences to "... assist individuals to remove blocks to awareness, facilitate experimental learning [Foulds et al.,
Although both groups began each session with similar exercises, it is believed that this "structured" use of techniques had no significant effect upon the unique and individual nature of the two groups. Because the exercises rarely took longer than 30 minutes to complete, each group had ample time in which to respond to the exercises in its own way, thus preventing any artificial constraints being placed on the group process.

Groups met once a week for eight weeks for two hours per session and were observed through one-way mirrors by the group leader not having a session at that particular time. Three psychology faculty members who had expressed an interest in the experiential-Gestalt group process also observed. In order to maximize the effectiveness of the experiential groups group leaders and observing faculty members held weekly meetings to discuss the groups' progress and specific experiential experiments to be utilized in future sessions.
Results

Although group participants tended to verbally express their experiential-Gestalt growth group experience as positive and productive, an examination of pretest and posttest scores on the measure of Expressed SA and Expressed AO indicated no significant changes in acceptance of self or acceptance of others. An analysis of variance of the split-plot design was conducted to measure the hypothesized changes in SA and AO due to treatment and is summarized in Table 1 and Table 2.

Although analysis of the data indicated that the treatment effects were not significant (p > .05), the findings did indicate movement toward increased SA over time for both experimental and control groups, F (1,23) = 13.471, p < .01. This increase in expressed SA was brought about due to undetermined factors during the time between pre- and posttesting and not directly attributable to the group process.
Table 1
Analysis of Variance
SA Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatments</td>
<td>2730.174</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1365.087</td>
<td>1.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (a)</td>
<td>23563.750</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1024.510</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>816.077</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>816.077</td>
<td>13.471 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatments</td>
<td>120.623</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60.311</td>
<td>.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (b)</td>
<td>1393.300</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>60.578</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28623.924</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .01
Table 2
Analysis of Variance
AO Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatments</td>
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<td>173.85</td>
<td>.909</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error (a)</td>
<td>4397.30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>191.186</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>48.076</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48.076</td>
<td>2.444</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treatments</td>
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<td>4.312</td>
<td>.219</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error (b)</td>
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<td>19.665</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5253.83</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

The hypotheses that individuals' levels of SA and AO would increase as a function of participation in experiential-Gestalt growth groups were not supported by the present study's findings. Although differences between SA pretest and posttest scores were significant, this significant increase was present in both control subjects as well as in experimental subjects. Therefore the apparent increases reported for SA were not attributable to participation in the growth group process.

In considering the present study's findings attention should be directed toward the selection and composition of the control group population utilized in this study. The control subjects were selected from a pool of volunteers who had previously expressed an interest in participating in a growth group, as had the experimental subjects. Typically, however, proper consideration is not given to the methodological concerns involved in the appropriate matching of experimental and control groups on the criterion of subject volunteering. Studies that employ subjects who volunteer for some type of group process are studying what is essentially a self-selected sample (Rubin, 1967b). It should be considered a grave methodological error to match volunteer subjects with non-volunteer control subjects only on the
basis of sex, age, and pretest scores. Failure to take into account the possible personological differences between those subjects who volunteer and those who do not may lead to misrepresentation of a study's results. This is particularly true of studies that are concerned with individual growth and human potential.

Sheridan and Shock (1970) have demonstrated that volunteer subjects score higher on a measure of personal growth than do non-volunteering subjects. They conclude that subjects who volunteer for growth facilitating experiences may already be moving in the direction of greater personal growth. Such a conclusion may explain why both the experimental and control subjects used in the present study increased in their level of expressed SA over time. It is quite possible that much of the past research dealing with the effects of group process on personal growth has, in fact, employed inadequate controls, thus giving the illusion of significant results (Foulds, 1970; Guinan et al., 1973; McIntire, 1973). The present study has taken into consideration the criterion of subject volunteering and thus avoided the illusion of significant findings when there were none.

The question of what is growth facilitative in the group process is not easily answered. A number of variables can affect group change (Lieberman et al., 1973). These change producing variables are doubly complex when one considers their interaction effect with what has previously been labeled as "group uniqueness," or the individuality of
each growth group. It is therefore extremely difficult to identify what is growth producing for people participating in a group process that has as its goal the personal growth of each individual member. The variables of SA and AO are inexorably joined in the personal growth of the individual and cannot be neatly separated or compartmentalized from that personal growth.

In the present study a number of variables may not have been optimal in providing the conditions necessary for group change and thus affected the findings. The short number of group sessions and the limited period of time involved in each session may not have been conducive for significant changes in SA or AO. The lack of experience of the group facilitators may have also been detrimental in facilitating change. The presence of a one-way mirror, faculty observation, the college setting, and testing itself may have resulted in defensiveness on the part of group members which interfered with their ability to risk change.

Another variable that should be considered with regard to the present study's findings is the consolidation or assimilation of the group experience by its participants. The posttesting was conducted during a two day interval following the last group session. Harrison (1966) has found that group change in members tended to be more significant three months after the last group session. His findings indicate that a period of consolidation of the group experience for participants may be necessary before an accurate
estimate of change can be made. Thus the short interval of time between termination of the groups and administration of the posttest may have contributed to the present study's lack of significant findings.

Possible limitations of the SA-AO measure employed may have also contributed to the lack of significant results in the present study. It is quite possible that important changes occurred in participants' SA and AO that were not adequately assessed by the measure. In addition, because of high SA and AO pretest scores for many group members the test instrument may not have been psychometrically powerful enough to assess significant SA-AO increases in those individuals.

There appear to be other factors which may have affected the total outcome of the present study. The experiential-Gestalt growth group experience was apparently effective in enhancing levels of SA and AO for some group members, while other participants decreased or remained the same as measured by the SA-AO scales. Possible significant change could have been "balanced out" due to movement in both positive and negative directions within each experimental group.

One more factor that should be considered with regard to the present study's results is the possibility that experimental subjects did indeed increase in their levels of SA and were therefore more truthful in their responses to posttest items. It is conceivable that as a result of group participation these subjects denied less about themselves and were
therefore able to admit to qualities on the posttest that they were previously unaware of or unable to admit to. Their increased truthfulness could have then had the effect of lowering their posttest scores, resulting in non-significant results.

A conclusion that may be drawn from the present study and review of previous studies is that the effects of experiential-Gestalt growth groups upon SA and AO is still largely undetermined. Further research in experiential groups and their effects upon an individual's SA and AO is called for.

Other factors which were not examined in the present study appear to need further investigative research. The use of longer and more frequent group sessions for greater exposure to the group experience and the effects of using more experienced experiential-Gestalt group leaders are areas that need to be explored. Settings for the group experience that are not as potentially threatening to group members should also be investigated. In addition, posttesting that is done after a relatively prolonged period of time following termination of the group experience is an area that requires further research. However, in investigating the effects of delayed posttesting proper consideration should be given to the unknown and possibly unmeasurable factors that may influence an individual's life and personal growth between the time of group termination and posttesting.

In summary, the hypotheses stating that an individual's levels of SA and AO would be increased as a function of participating in an experiential-Gestalt growth group were not
accepted. A conclusion of the present study was that members did not significantly increase their SA or AO as a result of participation in the groups as measured by the scales for Expressed Self-Acceptance and Expressed Acceptance of Others. A tendency toward increased SA was observed over time for both the experimental and control groups. The increase in levels of SA over time appeared to be unattributable to the treatment and was apparently due to unknown factors not related to group process. Several unanswered questions involving both methodological procedure and group processes need further study before the potential effects of experiential groups on acceptance of one's self and his acceptance of other people can be adequately understood.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

GROWTH GROUP OPPORTUNITY

We are looking for people who wish to learn more about themselves, more about others, and who wish to develop more meaningful ways of relating to the world around them. In providing such an opportunity, and as part of a research study on groups, we are forming "awareness" groups for the spring semester in which as a group participant you will:

- Learn how to be more open, especially with yourself

- Experience new methods of interaction with others and more awareness of what your present style is

- Discover your potential by increased awareness of new as well as forgotten thoughts and feelings, and in feeling and living more fully and honestly

- Learn to be comfortable with the "real" you rather than spending your time trying to be what you should be, what you would like to be, or what someone else expects you to be

- Discover the joy of accepting yourself and of taking responsibility for your own life

There will be an organizational meeting for all interested participants on Tuesday, January 21st, at 5:00 pm in Room 132 of the College of Education. It must be stressed that this will be an organizational meeting during which times and places for groups will be decided. Groups will be formed from those volunteers present at this meeting. If you have questions, come to this meeting or contact Dan Brown at 843-6214 or Dan Miller at 842-2769.
CORRECTION

PRECEDING IMAGE HAS BEEN REFILMED
TO ASSURE LEGIBILITY OR TO CORRECT A POSSIBLE ERROR
APPENDIX B

GUIDELINES FOR GROWTH GROUPS

Research Study
Western Kentucky University
Spring 1975

The general purpose of these groups is to provide opportunities for people to learn about themselves and thereby be able to relate more fully and effectively to the world around them. In addition, data will be collected from group members as part of a research project. All groups will be given pre- and posttesting on two psychological instruments. In return for contributing to research in this way, there will be no fee assessed to participants.

The groups will be experiential-Gestalt in orientation and will focus on individuals' moment-to-moment experiencing. A variety of techniques including sensory awareness exercises, nonverbal exercises, Gestalt awareness training, psychodrama, and fantasy experiences will be used as opportunities for participants to experience and express themselves in different ways.

The group leaders consist of two second year graduate students in clinical psychology. Three psychology faculty members are also involved in a supervisory capacity. All leaders and supervisors are currently at Western Kentucky University and have an expressed interest in group process and the human potential.

These groups are not intended to be "therapy" groups in the sense of alleviating stressful psychological problems. Rather, the group leader's responsibility is to provide opportunities for participants to increase awareness of themselves and others. Personal strengths rather than weaknesses, and potentialities rather than deficiencies will be emphasized. Group members are expected to attend and participate in each scheduled group session. This must be considered a unique experience and commitment for each of you and is not directly related to your academic program here at Western.

The content of any group session will be confidential within that group. Group leaders will, however, be working together closely in order to make the groups similar and to maximize the productiveness of each group. Therefore, group leaders and supervisors may at times observe groups other than their own, being concerned primarily with the processes rather than the content of those groups.

Dan Brown and Dan Miller, Research Leaders
APPENDIX C

Criterion Definitions of Self-Acceptance and Acceptance of Others

Self-acceptance definitions

The self-accepting person: (1) relies primarily upon internalized values and standards rather than on external pressure as a guide for his behavior; (2) has faith in his capacity to cope with life; (3) assumes responsibility for and accepts the consequences of his own behavior; (4) accepts praise or criticism from others objectively; (5) does not attempt to deny or distort any feelings, motives, limitations, abilities, or favorable qualities which he sees in himself, but rather accepts all without self-condemnation; (6) considers himself a person of worth on an equal plane with other persons; (7) does not expect others to reject him whether he gives them any reason to reject him or not; (8) does not regard himself as totally different from others, "queer," or generally abnormal in his reactions; (9) is not shy or self-conscious (Berger, 1952).

Other-acceptance definitions

The person who is accepting of others: (1) does not reject, hate, or pass judgment against other persons when
their behavior or standards seem to him to be contradictory to his own; (2) does not attempt to dominate others; (3) does not attempt to assume responsibility for others; (4) does not deny the worth of others or their equality as persons with him (This does not imply equality in regard to specific achievement. He feels neither above nor below the people he meets); (5) shows a desire to serve others; (6) takes an active interest in others and shows a desire to create mutually satisfactory relations with them; (7) in attempting to advance his own welfare he is careful not to infringe on the rights of others (Berger, 1952).
APPENDIX D

Awareness Group Exercises

The following descriptions of various exercises employed in this study should in no way be considered as a comprehensive or exhaustive examination of particular techniques available to the group leader conducting experiential-Gestalt growth groups. Each description should be considered brief and as presenting a basic rationale for its use. It should be pointed out that what is important in any "growth" group are the people involved and not the techniques employed. Different groups will have different goals and needs, and the exercises employed in this study should be considered only as possible methods for facilitating personal growth. Variations and alterations of any "technique" to fit the situation is encouraged. Rigid adherence to the "rules" of an exercise can often be more destructive than facilitative.

Sensory Awareness Exercises

The individual/organism and his environment are not separate or mutually exclusive entities but are instead considered to "constitute a functioning, mutually influencing, total system [Perls et al., 1951, p. 73]." Both the "self" and the environment are obviously interdependent upon one another. The individual sustains himself, acts on and reacts to his environment. As a result of contact with his world
the individual changes, organizes and reorganizes his environment. In addition, without the interaction between the individual and his environment, the "world" would cease to exist, at least for that particular experiencing individual. Contact between the person and his environment may then be seen as the "ultimate reality [Perls et al., 1951, p. 73]."

One of the primary purposes of the Gestalt-oriented growth group is to have its participants tune into and increase their awareness of their own "ultimate reality." One cannot grow if his contact with his own experiential reality is hampered or blocked. It is therefore the purpose of sensory awareness exercises to increase that awareness of contact between the self and the world in which the self interacts. It is for this reason that exercises dealing with the "contact" areas of touch, hearing, sight, and internal feelings are utilized. Internal feelings are dealt with because they are always reactions to contact with the environmental field. The senses of taste and smell, although legitimate "contact" mechanisms, were not dealt with in the present study for reasons of practicability.

In order to familiarize group participants with the concept of "here-and-now" experiencing and organismic reality the "three zones of awareness" (Stevens, 1971) were dealt with. These exercises are considered conducive in teaching and getting "in touch" with the basic elements of awareness. All experiences can be divided into three zones or areas: (a) awareness of the outside world, i.e. what one sees, hears,
tongues, tastes, and smells; (b) awareness of the inside world, i.e. what one feels inside the skin, such as itches and muscular tensions; (c) awareness of fantasy activity, i.e. "... all mental activity beyond the present awareness of ongoing experience [Stevens, 1972, p. 6]." Fantasy activity includes such things as guessing, thinking, anticipating, and remembering.

Participants focus on where their awareness normally goes, i.e. inside or outside the skin. Members are encouraged to become aware of how fantasy thinking interferes with actual organismic experiencing. They are also encouraged to direct their sensory awareness to all three awareness zones and to "get in touch" with feelings or reactions they have to their experience. There are a variety of specific methods or exercises available to direct group members' awareness, but all emphasize "here-and-now" experiencing via the senses or "contact boundaries."

**Psychodrama**

The purpose of utilizing psychodrama is to allow participants to experience or increase their awareness of how and why others feel and act as they do. In addition, by playing various "roles" group members may also get in touch with feelings or parts of themselves that were previously blocked, i.e. the "strong" individual who cannot admit weakness in himself or tolerate it in others plays the part of a "weak" person. By playing weak this "strong" individual learns that he also has feelings of weakness that he formerly was unable
to accept. From this experience the individual gains insight into his own self and the functioning of others.

There are several variations of "role-playing" or psychodrama. If an individual is experiencing conflict in his relationship with another person, he is encouraged to play two parts—himself and the other person. By having a dialogue between himself and the "other" individual a new perspective of the other person may be gained via experiencing the situation from another point of view.

Another aspect of the psychodrama is that it allows participants to bring "unfinished business" or conflict ridden feelings from the past into the present. It is a premise of Gestalt therapy that only in the "here-and-now" can one deal effectively with problematic concerns that hamper growth and prevent development of personal potential. Merely talking about problems will do little to resolve them. Rather, the Gestalt-oriented group leader encourages members to bring their feelings concerning problem situations or conflicts into the present where they can be truly experienced and dealt with. Once the "actor" gets in touch with those feelings he can, with the help and support from the group, see them for what they are and deal with them, e.g. assimilating or finishing his "unfinished business."

**Fantasy Trips**

The use of fantasy in the experiential-Gestalt group can be manifold. The Gestalt-oriented group leader holds that any fantasy activity on the part of the individual reflects something about that individual. The fantasy trip may reflect the
individual's self-concept, attitudes toward others, parts of the self that are being blocked and need expressing, and problematic areas that hinder the actualizing growth of the individual.

The use of fantasy in the present study was limited to a form of directed daydreaming, e.g. members were encouraged to imagine what they would be like as a tree. The purpose of such an exercise is to allow participants to explore aspects of themselves that are new or unfamiliar, or parts of themselves they may wish to deny. Different individuals have different fantasy trips regardless of instructions. By sharing their fantasy experience group members learn something about each other and themselves. The fantasy trip is seen as an expression of the participant and his life situation. Often areas of concern for the individual manifest themselves in the fantasy reflecting needs, wants, and unfinished business.

Language/Responsibility Exercises

Personal responsibility for one's own life is emphasized in the Gestalt-oriented growth group. By becoming aware of how they avoid responsibility for their lives, it is believed that group members are better equipped to take responsibility for their own feelings and behavior. Only by becoming aware of how one places expectations and demands on others can one begin to accept others for what they are. Accordingly, only by becoming aware of the demands and expectations that one places on oneself can the individual truly begin to accept himself. What we say and how we say it greatly influences our
thinking and behavior. In order to become aware of how people attempt to avoid responsibility for their own feelings and manipulate others into sharing that responsibility specific "language" exercises can be employed.

By simply changing key words in statements addressed to others participants learn how they avoid responsibility for their own lives and thus avoid the freedom of "being" that responsibility carries with it. Examples of such exercises include: (1) replacing "I can't" with "I won't" or replacing "I have to" with "I choose to"; (2) group members begin each statement they make with the word "it" for about four minutes and then discuss how they felt as they did this, after which the procedure is repeated with statements beginning with the words "you," "we," and "I." Beginning a sentence with "it" removes responsibility from the speaker for what is being said and places that responsibility somewhere outside. Starting a sentence with "you" tends to make the other person defensive or hostile and again avoids responsibility for what the speaker really is saying. "We" shares the responsibility or blame of what one is saying, while "I" clearly indicates what the speaker is saying and does not allow him to avoid responsibility for what he wants or is feeling.