

Abstract

This dissertation explores the phenomenon of confluence in psychotherapy, understood as a contact modification that blurs the boundary between self and other. Grounded in a humanistic and integrative framework, the study examines the developmental, relational, and cultural origins of confluent processes and their implications for therapeutic work. The literature traces the historical evolution of confluence within Gestalt therapy, from its original conception as a boundary disturbance to more contemporary perspectives that frame it as a relational, creative adjustment. The case study demonstrates how confluence can manifest in the therapeutic relationship and how therapist awareness, differentiation, and attunement can support a client's movement towards authentic contact. This is informed by countertransference reflections, neurobiological research, and relational ethics. The dissertation concludes that confluence, while potentially limiting when fixed, is a nuanced and often adaptive strategy for maintaining relational safety. This work demonstrates how greater awareness of confluent dynamics within the co-created relational field can deepen therapeutic presence, support relational repair, and foster healthy differentiation.