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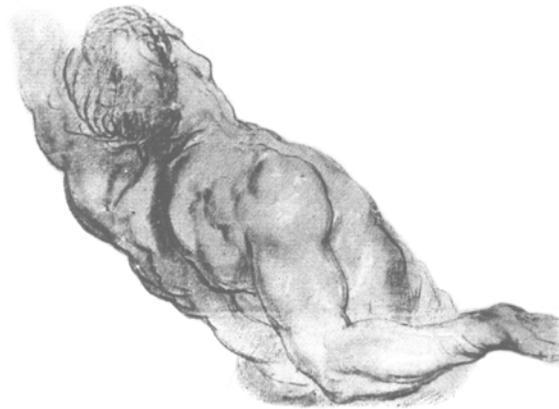
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USABP Mission Statement

The USABP believes that integration of the body and the mind is essential to effective psychotherapy, and to that end its mission is to develop and advance the art, science, and practice of body psychotherapy in a professional, ethical, and caring manner in order to promote the health and welfare of humanity.

# A Tale of Four Body Psychotherapists: The Training and Practice of Mexican Practitioners

Fernando Ortiz Lachica, PsyD

## Abstract

This paper describes the training and practice of four Mexican body psychotherapists, each of which have completed three or more training programs and were interviewed in depth regarding them. This paper attempts to construct an ideal type of experience, through following a golden thread that integrates the narratives of the participants, from their initial contact with body psychotherapy to their current integration of concepts, methods, techniques and personal experiences.

## Keywords

Body – Psychotherapy – Training – Integrative Psychotherapy

## Training in Body Psychotherapy: Diversity and Integration

With more than 30 varieties in Europe alone (Young, 2008), body psychotherapy (BP) is characterized by diversity, so much so that Martlock and Weiss, editors of the *Handbuch der Körperpsychotherapie* (2001), state that it does not exist as a theoretically and clinically unified field. I (Ortiz, 2007a) have discussed the reasons for this diversity elsewhere. We can see that on one hand, there have been enormously creative founders of schools who have made a synthesis of existing methods and have discovered new and exciting ways to work with the body and the mind, and on the other hand, there have been many pioneers who were not aware of these developments. Yet there are many gratifications both personal and economic to be found in starting a new school, even if it means inventing new names for old concepts and procedures.

The number of schools, concepts and techniques can be baffling, and the therapist-to-be has to choose among various training possibilities. As some schools of body psychotherapy do not recognize or communicate with each other (Young, 2005) and some of the founders and leaders do not tolerate even minor deviances from their creed, trainees and certified practitioners often have to pledge loyalty to their tribe and ignore or debase other modalities. In fact, many practitioners are certified in two or more modalities in Europe (Heller, 2001) and the U. S. A. (Burns, personal communication, September 10, 2008). We can only guess the reasons that motivate each therapist to complete two or more trainings, which may range from the limitations of their first training to their continuing drive for professional and personal growth. In fact, that is the case with psychotherapists in general. One-quarter to one-half of American clinicians consider themselves eclectic or integrative (Norcross, 2005), making it the most common orientation in the United States.

Even if some body psychotherapists are loyal only to one school, one must bear in mind that many modalities are, themselves, products of the integration of many schools. Consider, for example, the number of founders that were influenced by Gestalt itself an integration of Psychoanalysis, Reichian character analysis, psychodrama and the Alexander Technique, to mention but a few (Shepard, 1983). If psychotherapy is a craft and not a science (Young & Heller, 2000), then we can expect every clinician to develop his or her own integration of concepts and procedures, regardless of initial allegiance to a particular school. The aim of this paper is to describe the training and practice of four “integrative” Mexican body psychotherapists.

## Body Psychotherapy in Mexico

Body psychotherapy became established in Mexico in the 70's, through the work of Rafael Estada Villa, Héctor Kuri and Agustín Ramírez. Each one of them was heavily influenced by Bioenergetics, which was at that time synonymous for Body Psychotherapy, although they all had experience in other modalities. Both Estrada and Kuri blended diverse oriental practices into their individual sessions and workshops and Ramírez had studied with Carl Rogers and Jakob Moreno (Ortiz, 2007b).

These pioneers and their students formed institutes that trained therapists in the next decade, in what may be labeled a neo-Reichian tradition; somewhat grounded in classical psychoanalysis, with a strong emphasis on Lowen's character types, and aimed to produce strong emotional reactions through the use of Bioenergetics and other techniques. Many of their trainees were neither psychologists nor psychiatrists, as the practice of psychotherapy is not regulated in Mexico.

Following this basic training, many therapists sought further specialization in brand name modalities. Among the founders and leaders of schools that led training programs<sup>1</sup> were Jack Painter (Postural Integration starting in the middle 70's); John Pierrakos (Core Energetics, which began in 1989); Wilem Poppeliers (Sexual Grounding, 1996); Luciano Rispoli (Functional Psychotherapy, 1998-2004); Ron Kurtz and Donna Martin (Hakomi, 1999). Bjorn Blumenthal started a training

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<sup>1</sup> In most cases the trainings continued to be led by the Mexican or foreign students of the first trainers.

program in Vegetotherapy in 2006, which was continued by Xavier Serrano in 2008<sup>2</sup>.

These trainings consisted of intensive, four to seven day sessions that were mostly residential. That is, participants left their homes and occupations, and stayed together. Everyone looked forward to watch the masters' performance and, in many cases, to receive an individual session in the group. Expectations ran high, at least at the beginning of these trainings. It was hoped that this modality was "it," or the one that could assure growth and healing to the trainees and at the same time provide the necessary skills for a successful private practice.

Most of the training programs were experiential, so the participants did not have to read or fulfill any academic requirements in order to be certified. In the case of the foreign trainers, the students didn't usually meet between sessions, so they had to integrate whatever feelings and memories emerged quite on their own, or in individual therapy.

Thus, the therapists who completed more than one training program not only had to integrate the methods, techniques and concepts of diverse modalities, but also had to assimilate the personal experiences and material that came up in the various programs.

## Method

This qualitative research attempts to describe the experience of body psychotherapists who 1) had more than ten years of clinical practice, 2) had finished more than two training programs in body psychotherapy, 3) had led or organized training programs, and 4) had lived in Mexico City. The first three criteria assured that the participants were well known experts in the field.

In fact, the participants had a mean 17.5 years of practice, with a maximum of 23 and a minimum of 13. According to Orlinsky et. al.'s (2005), two of them were established psychotherapists (with between 7 and 15 years of experience) and the rest were seasoned psychotherapists (with more than 15 and less than 25 years of practice). Each one of them had completed at least three training programs and all of them have participated as assistants, organizers or teachers in training programs.

The participants were interviewed at least twice<sup>3</sup> in depth about their training and practice<sup>4</sup>, and the transcripts were codified and analyzed in search of common, emerging themes. The first draft of the analysis was sent to them for verification. All of them agreed with the content, except for one minor observation. Their narratives are an account of the history and practice of body psychotherapy in Mexico.

## The Therapists' Tales

In the beginning, none of the participants intended to become psychotherapists. None of the individuals studied had enrolled in a certification course in psychotherapy after studying psychology, as was the norm for other orientations before the middle 1970's. Their training started before it began and is still not over. To say that it had started before it had begun may seem nonsense, but the truth is that they all experienced body psychotherapy as clients or participants in workshops, and it was only after they felt the effects of the therapeutic process that they entered a training program. And, even then, they were not clear about becoming therapists<sup>5</sup>. Thus, the first stage in their process was a personal search. But why did they need this search? On a personal level, they all had some degree of discontent, which moved them to seek change and growth.

Like the princes of Serendip, all of them found more than they were searching for: a network of friends who shared their interests and a great degree of information about their past, their emotions and their body. They also would hope to find a framework in which they could integrate the cognitive, emotional and sensory-motor experiences that were elicited in the trainings and workshops. More importantly, they found a calling in Weber's (1905) sense: they abandoned their former occupations and, in becoming psychotherapists, found a profession that has given meaning and purpose to their lives and has allowed them to forge a new identity.

## *The Context*

The participants' training process cannot be understood only in personal terms. Within the spirit of the Human Potential Movement, with its emphasis on experience, liberty of expression and the importance of authenticity in relationships, different institutes offered workshops and training programs in which all of that had happened, without any formal requisites for enrollment. Anyone could sign up and all that was asked for was participation. The intent to change and the participant's search flowered in the zeitgeist in which three of them started to participate in body psychotherapy workshops. According to

<sup>2</sup> For information on these modalities see Painter (1987) Pierrakos, (1987); Poppeliers & Broesterhuizen, (2007); Rispoli (1993, 1997, 2004); Kurtz, (1990); Blumenthal (2001) and Serrano (2007).

<sup>3</sup> Of a total of twelve interviews, Marisa participated in four, Gerardo and Eugenia in three and Nadia in two.

<sup>4</sup> They all signed an informed consent, in which they were told about the purpose of the study and were assured that it would not involve personal information, and that their anonymity would be protected.

<sup>5</sup> Some of the training programs allow participants to enroll with the sole purpose of personal growth.

Eugenia<sup>6</sup>, one of the participants, “we were searching for liberty within ourselves (liberty of movement, new sensory experiences and fuller expression of emotions) and outside [ourselves] (human rights, contact without prejudice).” Freedom and expression were values of the 70’s in which, according to Gerardo, Reich was seen as a revolutionary. Workshops and training programs were seen as a manifestation of a new lifestyle, because things were not too good in the world and something was missing inside. Nadia remembers one of her teachers/therapists whose libertarian, revolutionary spirit got her out of the outdated ideas of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was, according to Eugenia, “Mexican post-hippism.”

For the participants, these private institutions were their Colleges and Universities, the workshops were equivalent to courses, and training programs were equivalent to their graduate studies. It was possible to enroll in “courses” or even in training programs only with personal growth as a goal, without the explicit intention of becoming a psychotherapist.

Starting a training process by participating in workshops differs from the experience of therapists from other theoretical orientations (Godfried, 2001). Participation in workshops was important for therapists whose initial training was psychodynamic (Smith –Benjamin, 2001), cognitive-behavioral (Lazarus, 2001; Mahoney, 2001) and experiential (Beutler, 2001), but all of them enrolled in them after finishing graduate studies in psychology.

In fact, training in body psychotherapy couldn’t have happened in any other way. Even if it is a discipline that began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it has developed, until recently, away from academia. On the other hand, the experiential nature of Body Psychotherapy makes it hard to be taught or communicated by traditional means. As Heller (2001:17) remarked, “in our field, workshops are the equivalent of articles in most other forms of knowledge. In workshops, we compare ways of doing things and integrate them.” Our interviewees would agree. All of them defend experiential learning.

### *Workshops and Training programs: An Experience in Informal Education*

Before starting a training program, all of the interviewees participated in workshops. The idea of becoming a therapist came later. In the beginning, they looked for personal growth and change.

The invitation to participate in their first workshop came from a relative, therapist or friend, and they went with the intention of complementing their individual therapy processes or to find out about themselves. Eugenia described workshops as “having a practical experience of a theoretical principle... a teacher comes, you see his practice, and you do it and hope that it gives you a life experience.” The workshops offered a package of personal growth and practical knowledge of psychology rarely offered in universities and colleges. Some, like Fisher Hoffman, dealt with issues to work with, such as the relationships with parents. In others, there were demonstrations and practices of a particular form of bodywork, such as Ayurvedic Massage, and there were those whose purpose was to know and experience the work of the founder of a body psychotherapy modality (as was the case with John Pierrakos’ workshop near Mexico City<sup>7</sup>).

The workshops had a flavor of the Human Potential Movement of the middle 60’s and early 70’s. They offered weekend intensive growth experiences and gathered people who seemed to have little in common except for the intention of learning more about themselves, developing their potentials, or solving a problematic situation. The intensity of the experience, the perceived changes, the experiential knowledge they gained and the social interaction that took place in the workshops made them enroll in more of them. For some this was their preferred activity, consuming much of their free time and resources. Gerardo remembers: “The thing is I *felt*: I felt such a powerful effect, I felt a powerful movement and that is what hooked me to stay... so if I had to take a workshop, I took it, and if a course was offered, I went.” And they took many workshops. Nadia states: “I took all of them.” They learned theories and concepts in an experiential way and they felt changes. These changes were so real, according to Nadia, that they were felt in the body and they allowed her to perceive herself in a different way. The felt changes were, in Gerardo’s case, “the cause of the passion and latter “gusto” for becoming a therapist.

The combination of these factors made two of the participants feel that “this is where I belong.”<sup>8</sup> This is not to say that all of them have similar personal traits. Marisa, for example, sees herself as “a strong, “vibrant” woman, that is, “with a lot of energy,” and that is why she resonated with the intensity of the first workshop, where participants were encouraged to scream and hit mattresses. So she remembers, “that is what I had inside me.” In contrast, Nadia pictures herself as shy and believes that the uninhibited atmosphere, which was the norm in the groups, was just what she needed. In brief, every one of them stayed because they perceived that they needed and wanted to do what was done in the workshops and training programs, either because that was their nature or because that was the direction they wanted to take. When asked whether she continued to use the techniques she learned in the first workshops, Nadia answers: “I feel that they transformed me more and I stayed with the techniques... I feel they forged me.”

There is no clear line dividing workshops and training programs. In the participants’ experience, workshops and training programs are part of a continuum that is not easy to differentiate. Sometimes, a training program is promoted by a workshop, hoping the participants are hooked with the trainer and/or method and enroll, as it happened with Gerardo and Marisa. On the other hand, many training programs are structured in the typical workshop format, with intensive, residential

<sup>6</sup> The names of the participants have been changed.

<sup>7</sup> These examples are actual workshops that the participants took.

<sup>8</sup> Some of the actual expressions are, of course, impossible to translate accurately. Nadia said (in Spanish), “De aquí soy”.

sessions. All of the interviewees were trained this way in at least one modality and, even in the programs in which the students had to go to courses once or twice a week, the curriculum included workshops dealing with specific themes or methods.

### *Mentors*

All of the participants spoke about encounters or special relationships with a famous psychotherapist, usually the founder of a school or leader of a training program. The therapists played several roles: teachers, workshop leaders, psychotherapists and supervisors. In many cases, they became friends and partners in latter trainings. The best word to account for the relationship is that these people were mentors: older and experienced professionals that not only helped the participants to learn their skills, but served as role models (Levinson et. al., 1978) All of them remember special moments with their mentors, which happened 10, 15 or 20 years before, with gratitude and joy. Sometimes it is something that one of them said a small jewel of wisdom that was seen as a gift from an admired person that seemed to be destined for them and only them alone, and that they treasure for a long time:

...he told me “nothing matters except how you are” and I touched paradise in that moment, when he told me “the only thing that matters is how you are,” and that is how that part of wanting to be looked at in another way began to be nurtured, that is when it started.

The mentor can be someone with admirable qualities that serves as an example:

[I took] workshops with Adela Palcos<sup>9</sup>... really, to know her was very stimulating, very important. She is such a wise woman, so close, at the same time so natural.

In other cases, there is more of an ongoing relationship, as is the case with Gerardo, who had a mentor in every stage of his training:

I see myself in psychotherapy with two or three role models, that is, people that made me say to myself ‘I would like to work like that’. B, was the first one, with whom I hung around at the beginning, and for me, her modeling, her presence was valuable. Then there was A, one of the professionals that know more about the Person Centered Approach in Mexico, and I hung around him. And in Core, with S., I practically adopted him, and, and as I see it, my most important formative experiences did not come with the trainings as such, but in these relationships where I glued myself to these people... I went as an assistant, as an apprentice, as anything, as a translator with S, so I was there in everything he did [in Mexico]. And *that* was the most formative space, therapeutically speaking, right? More than the training itself. Not that I despise the training but this [relationship] took me to another level.

So Gerardo, in different stages of his training, sticks around with a mentor. In his own words, he goes as an assistant, translator, or anything in order to learn from his teachers. In that moment, he is not a participant in a workshop or a student in a training program, but an apprentice. Each one of the participants went through a similar experience. After finishing one or more of the training programs in which they enrolled, they assisted their teachers. They learned about their work from another perspective, and they continued their training under the tutorship of their mentors in a closer, more personal relationship than the common student. Gerardo remembers:

With all of them I was in a personal process as a client, and in that moment all of them were parent figures. With all of them, as well, I became involved in a personal relationship, friendly and collaborative, and I feel gratitude and affection for them all.

The mentor-apprentice relationship, according to Levinson et. al. (1978) is not an equivalent one to the relationship with a mother or father figure. The mentor is usually eight to fifteen years older than his apprentice is and must place himself between the role of father and that of peer. In the case of our participants, the mentors were, at one time, therapists, and as such were objects of transference, but the relationship wasn't only about a patient projecting unresolved, past feelings on a therapist, but about adults in transition who found persons of greater experience that helped them to realize “The Dream:” an imagined possibility generating excitation and vitality. The dream is their calling, or *beruf* in Weber's (1905) sense, is becoming a psychotherapist. It was the relationship with their mentors that made it real for them.

Not only do the trainees learn skills, but are also they motivated. According to Nadia, the mentor's main function is to see the potentiality of the apprentice and say to her “yes, you can.” She thinks that if you admire something in someone, it is always a part of you that has not yet developed, and so: “These parts become excited, right? To step into the stage... the

<sup>9</sup> Adela Palcos founded the *Río Abierto* School in Argentina.

mentor's admired qualities invite those parts in us that are asleep, that have not been asked out." So, when she speaks about what she learned from her teachers, she makes an inventory of virtues and attitudes:

- "B taught me to 'go for it,' or to go deep, not to beat around the bush. She taught me not to be afraid of the process- to trust the process."
- "One of the things I liked about T is that he knew how to change. When he first came to Mexico he was as hard as a stick, and he let himself be transformed by Mexicans. And his body changed!"
- "What I liked most about R. is that he got me out of my context. It is as if he said 'There is another way of living, of experimenting. Don't be afraid, challenge!' He was a charismatic leader that gathered us around a table and read to us, like a patriarch, which for me was very important because fathers do that."
- "From J, I think, his joy is of living. He also is one who is not afraid to go beyond, to break paradigms. [He is] an inspiring person."

Summing up, not only did the mentors teach skills and concepts to their trainees, but also they inspired them with their attitude towards psychotherapy and towards life.

### Becoming Body Psychotherapists

#### *From Eagerness to Selectiveness*

In their progress, from the first workshop to the present moment, the participants learned diverse, sometimes contradictory, concepts and techniques. They discovered things about themselves and went through intense, sometimes painful emotional experiences. The theories, skills and experiences had to be integrated in order to form a personal and professional identity. The stages of the process can be described in terms of polarities.

In the beginning, all of the participants were eager to go to almost every available workshop and training program. Marisa reflects on that stage:

Look, I was very wild and my consciousness wasn't ... [it] was crude (laughter). I couldn't discriminate those things, I mean, I grabbed everything as in a package and I didn't say 'this goes, this doesn't.' In time, becoming more refined, I could say 'this does not go.' But not at the beginning. *It is now* that something matured, something developed, that I can discriminate.

Speaking about conferences, Eugenia confesses that, at the beginning, she would have liked to participate in every scheduled workshop in a conference, and in another stage, she would probably have liked to take half of them, and then later maybe less. Now, after going through the program repeatedly, she said that she would have liked to sign up for only two. As they learned and experienced more, they became more selective.

The same thing happened with training programs. All of them had an initial neo-Reichian training, which emphasized provoking strong emotional reactions through confrontation, stressful postures and invasive massage. On finishing, they knew body reading based mainly on Lowen's Character Types, but soon they learned that it was not enough. Looking for structure and skills they did not have, three of them studied Gestalt and the Person Centered Approach and Psychodrama. According to Nadia and Ariadna, the Gestalt-Rogerian training allowed them to get the guiding thread, while Marisa says she "completed herself" a little more in learning how to interview and foster rapport. Eugenia, who studied Psychodrama, says she obtained the structure she was lacking. Summing up, all of them acquired technical skills in their first training, but they did not know how to employ them in the context of a therapeutic relationship.

After studying Gestalt or Psychodrama, all of them enrolled in other training programs in different modalities of Body Psychotherapy or other orientations. In some cases, they did not integrate the trainings into their current practice. Marisa, for instance, tell us that she studied Jung, but it didn't seem to match with Body Psychotherapy, "like, it was turning out to be a cocktail that didn't taste good," while Eugenia remembers a training program that taught her how she "did not want to work." All of them went through one training program that seemed irrelevant, as they did not mention it in their narratives. But they went on and eventually learned modalities that seemed adequate. Among them are The Hakomi Method, Vegetotherapy and Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy.

In integrating their various programs, they went past the allegiance to their first orientation, realizing its strengths and limitations, and made a personal synthesis. Workshops and training programs were offered as in a smorgasbord. At the beginning, they wanted to eat all that was offered, and in fact, they did. Afterwards, as Marisa recalls, they needed a time to digest. Now they have learned to be more selective. Even if they continue learning about specific subjects (two of them mentioned anatomy and neurology), or specializing in their favored modality, they wouldn't enroll in any workshop or training.

*From the Wild Stage to Collaborative Relationships*

As all the training programs involved working a personal process, all of the participants went through intense, sometimes difficult and painful experiences. Thus, workshops and trainings were sometimes dangerous. All of them speak about a wild period, when some leaders/therapists pressured trainees looking for catharsis at any cost. Emotional discharge was the goal, and it was achieved through pressuring the group members. Any attitude that seemed fake or defensive was confronted harshly, and techniques such as stressful postures, painful pressures on chronically tense muscles, or expressive movements such as hitting a mattress with a racket or shouting, were encouraged. All of that came with pressure from the therapist and group, which could be stated quite simply: “Get it out!” The belief behind these practices was that movement in itself was good, so one had to move the body, move energy, and move emotions because stagnation was sickly and movement and expression were prerequisites for healing. However, sometimes the movement was too much. As Marisa Remembers

... It was so much that was moved there, that I went through there (she mentions a training program). Oh! Images come to me of what I lived there. Well, if I tell you, in my experience it is going into madness and not staying there (laughter). It is so strong, so much. So I think that if I already went through all of that, nothing will happen. What I learned is to ‘beware of not integrating! Its O. K. to unblock but it has to be balanced with closure.

Eventually they abandoned these procedures, which now Eugenia criticizes:

In whatever way you had to hit, cry, [and] scream and that had a great value in the group because you were releasing. You were getting at *something*, right? And the more, the better. How cool! The truth is, who knows where you would arrive to, but, mm, really I don’t think it happened that way. That is what workshops were about: intensive practice that included *very* intensive emotional experiences.... Yes, I think that people might profit from an emotional release some time. *Yes* of course, but then again, in comparison, so is going to a party. I had never danced, and I did, and I had a lot of fun. It made a difference in my life.

The wild stage didn’t only mean invasive procedures, but an authoritarian attitude from the trainers and therapists. The four participants recall that some therapists/trainers were directive and even authoritarian. They carried their own agenda and were sometimes abusive, rationalizing their attitude based on the importance of emotional release and confrontation.

While all of them still use techniques or employ concepts learned in “the wild stage,” they do it cautiously, in a collaborative manner. Otherwise, according to Nadia, “you awaken old wounds and desires and you injure them again.” Speaking about his current use of unblocking the body and confronting defensive attitudes, Gerardo ponders:

For me the therapist’s attitude and intention is paramount. Because you can, you can hurt [patients] with the truth, or operating on their muscles, [or] you can use techniques cautiously, from a non-violent attitude; you can use hyperventilation, you can work on the body, and you can use emotional release...

Currently, the interviewees stress the importance of a collaborative relationship, not only with the consultant, but also, according to Nadia, who combines bodywork with psychotherapy, with the living tissue. When she touches someone’s body, she tunes in with each organ or muscle, waiting, attending, gently inviting it to let go instead of pushing through the tensions. The same attitude is shared by all of them, who place more emphasis on the healing power of an attuned relationship than on techniques.

### Integrating Modalities

All of the participants have made their own synthesis of methods and concepts. As in the case of mainstream therapists (Godfried, 2001), the perceived limitations of their first training made them integrate other orientations. As we said earlier, three of them studied a blend of Gestalt and the Person Centered Approach, and the other one trained in Psychodrama as a complement to the limitations of their first training. In their first years, they could be labeled “technical eclectics,” according to Norcross (2005). Presently, and still following Norcross’s classification, three have followed the route of theoretical integration, creating a personal synthesis that not only combines methods and techniques, but the underlying theories. All of them continue to use Reichian concepts, such character armor, but they have concepts, techniques and values from various orientations such as the Person Centered Approach, The Hakomi Method, Craniosacral Therapy and Family Constellations. Eugenia seems to be an assimilative integrationist, as she found Vegetotherapy to be “an axis, like a Christmas tree on which you hang ornaments.”

The integration of procedures from different modalities is done in the context of ongoing therapeutic relationships. To experiment with methods and techniques in the context of a workshop, with highly motivated and conscious trainees, is not the

same as working “in the trenches” of everyday private practice (Johanson, 1986). Here, too, adaptation and integration are necessary.

### Current Practice

The fact that our participants integrated two or more body psychotherapy modalities may explain, in part, why all of them feel nurtured by their practice. (Orlinsky et. al., 2005; Godfried, 2005). For them, psychotherapy is a calling. In Weber’s (1905) sense, is an occupation that fills their life with meaning and gets the best out of them. Their joy and sense of fulfillment is evident in their narratives:

- “I enjoy my work. I feel moved by my clients. Yesterday I had many sessions and I ended super satisfied, very pleased (Marisa).”
- “I live it as a mission towards myself, connected with a mission towards the world. This impeccability, this thing about doing something for much more than money (Nadia).”
- “[To work as a therapist] is almost a present. Not only do I like it, I get paid for it! (Gerardo)”
- “[I had worked with] this 26 year old girl, who has difficulty looking at people when she talked..., to work with [this issue] through the body and, oh, to reestablish the connection that was naturally there. I enjoy these simple things so much! (Eugenia).”

### Conclusion

In Mexico, as in many other countries, it is common for psychotherapists to feel distressed when they learn that people who have not studied psychology or psychiatry work as therapists. This situation is not new. In fact, Freud argued for psychoanalysts’ “need not be doctors,” and that they should be adequately trained. In reading these narratives, some might think that the sound and fury of the initial stages of the participants would have been avoided if only they had had proper academic studies. Some of the trainings they had, according to their own narratives, were irrelevant or even noxious, and sometimes they had to cope with abusive, authoritarian teachers as well as painful experiences. But then again, isn’t that the case with some college or graduate courses? Their never-ending search is a testimony of perseverance and commitment, for as Eugenia states:

In general, training programs offer ‘three years and you are done’. [Actually] it takes much longer. You keep on learning, but with less eagerness. I think it takes about ten years. At the beginning, *everything* changed you and [it went from a] ‘let’s do it this way’ [to a] ‘now let’s do it this other way.’ And you gradually develop your own style. You keep changing, but just a little.

The other participants, and their clients, would agree. All of them said that that one training program was not enough, and that it would be irresponsible to stay with only one. Even if the field of body psychotherapy is not unified theoretically or methodologically, each of them has achieved a coherent synthesis through hard work.

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#### Biography

**Fernando Ortiz Lachica** received a Masters Degree in Clinical Psychology from Universidad Iberoamericana, and is currently working for a PsyD. at Universidad de las Americas. He is a certified Hakomi Therapist and previously studied Psychodrama and Bioenergetics. He also completed training programs in Core Energetics and Functional Psychotherapy. He has led or participated in the training of therapists across Mexico and other countries. He is a full-time professor at Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, in Mexico City, and is the author of *La Relacion Cuerpo Mente: Pasado, Presente y Futuro de la Terapia Psicocorporal* and *Vivir con Estres*, both published by Editorial Pax, Mexico. Contact fernandoortizl@yahoo.com

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