

Gestalt theory



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Gestalt theory is based on the idea that the human brain is holistic and it perceives objects as whole systems rather than the sum of its parts. Discuss and analyze the significance of the contributions of Gestalt theory to human perception and cognition. Give 3 examples.

As I was reading and researching for this discussion I began to apply these principles of Gestalt perception theories and Gestalt therapy to my family.

What I see when Jaci (my 4 year old daughter) looks at things and gives me a description of what she is seeing her perception is very different than mine or my partners. Jaci is very creative and can see and do things much different than we do as adults. She has a subscription to highlights puzzle books. In these books there are several hidden pictures and she has a difficult time

Gestalt basically means “ unified whole” which refers to theories of perception developed during 1910- 1912 by Max Wertheimer and Wolfgang Kohler. The prominent founders of Gestalt theory are Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Kohler, and Kurt Koffka.

Gestalt theory attempted to describe how people organize things into groups which developed unified whole.

Wertheimer suggested the idea of “ apparent motion” an example in Goodwin, (2009) is “ if an interval between a flashing light is only 60 sec then the perception is not of two separate lights but of one light that is moving.” Wertheimer called this perception the phi-phenomenon.

Wertheimer wrote a paper “ Laws of Organization in Perceptual Forms” where he introduced several other principles related to perception and cognition.

These proposed principles he argued were the answer to understanding how individuals perception. The principles that were applied to understand this visual perception was similarity, anomaly, continuation, closure, proximity, and figure and ground. Gestalt is also known as the “ Law of Simplicity” or the “ Law of Pragnanz” (“ good figure”), which states that every stimulus is perceived as close to our reality, as possible (Goodwin, 2009).

Gestalt theorists believed that the whole is greater than the parts. In other words, the whole (a car) carried a different and greater meaning than its individual components (tire, paint, metal). When we look at the car (whole) a cognitive process takes place instantaneously; the mind makes a jump from understanding the parts (tires, paint, metal) to recognizing the entire car.

A simple composition may have only one figure however in a complex composition there will be several things to notice. We have a tendency to look from one object to the other and they each become figure however they cannot both be seen as figure and ground at the same time. The focus at any moment is the figure which then presumes that everything that is not figure is ground.

An example of this would be how camouflage works. It is a purposeful attempt to have the figure blend into ground. All tanks during the gulf war changed camouflage from the green camouflage of earlier wars to a brown base so that they could blend in with the sand. Because Gestalt theory suggests that things that share the same visual characteristics (color, texture, shape, size and value) they then are seen as belonging together.

This example illustrates how camouflage attempts to do just that, visually seeing the tank and the terrain as one thus, keeping soldiers safe from harm.

Gestalt theory continues to be seen in psychology today with several of his ideas. Lewin's theory about the power of the group and idea of a state of equilibrium are still powerful today. My work today is strongly focused on the group dynamic and the power of the group and part of the education involves our intrinsic need to seek equilibrium.