

TRANSPERSONALITY ASSESSMENT, RESEARCH, AND TESTING

Chapter 10

TRANSPERSONALITY ASSESSMENT, RESEARCH, and TESTING

Chapter Outline

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- B. Transpersonal assessment defined.

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- D. All assessment methods have strengths and weaknesses and various sources of error.
 - 1. Artificiality of psychometric measurements and laboratory experiments may be inappropriate to the phenomenon under study.
 - 2. Conceptual and methodological difficulties in defining and quantifying transpersonal traits and states.
- E. Assessment can help point the direction to transpersonal phenomena that require further study.
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- F. Transpersonal assessment can provide valuable answers to important questions.

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Learning Objectives

1. Describe the purpose and functions of psychological testing and assessment in conventional and transpersonal psychology.
2. Identify the main points of difference between conventional and transpersonal approaches to assessment.
3. Define the *transpersonal orientation* in psychology.
4. Define *transpersonal assessment*.
5. List the different research and assessment approaches that may be employed in clinical practice and the research setting to gather information about human personality and its transpersonal aspects.
6. Discuss the value of verbal reports as data in psychology.
7. Identify the variables that affect the completeness and accuracy of verbal reports.
8. Explain why verbal reports may be difficult to interpret and discuss their limitations.
9. Discuss the main points of difference between naturalistic observation and laboratory demonstration for assessing the nature, limits and reality of transpersonal aspects of human personality functioning.
10. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of case studies, personal histories, and life records as a source of information about the transpersonal dimensions of human personality action.
11. Describe how the case study method has been applied to the study of the transpersonal experience called "enlightenment."
12. Identify the various psychometric issues that the assessment of transpersonal constructs/phenomenon must address.
13. Discuss the three psychometric issues that McDonald et al. (1995) identified as particularly important to transpersonal assessment.
14. Identify seven self-report standardized questionnaires and inventories that can potentially guide further assessment and research into the transpersonal dimensions of human personality.
15. Discuss the challenge of transpersonality assessment to construct, design, and develop tests that are a meaningful, reliable, and valid as the behavior that they are intended to assess. Provide one example.
16. Identify and discuss the six assumptions that underlie the assessment of transpersonal constructs of human personality.
17. Distinguish between "states" and "traits."
18. Explain how the attribution of a trait or state to an individual or its presumed strength or magnitude is always a "relative" phenomenon.
19. Identify the main obstacle to the study of spiritual or transpersonal experiences, according to transpersonal psychiatrist Stanislav Grof.
20. Discuss the value of standardized, paper-and-pencil assessment instruments in transpersonally-oriented research and assessment.
21. Explain the meaning of the phrase, "Not everything that counts can be counted; not everything that can be counted counts," and give one example.
22. Describe Fechner's attempt to clarify the relationship between body, mind, and spirit and the actions that eventually lead to his creation of the field of *psychophysics*.
23. Explain why the assessment of transpersonality action is not something to be confined to the laboratory or to the use of psychological tests alone.
24. Describe how transpersonal researchers take a multi-layered, pluralistic approach to the study of transpersonal aspects of human personality.

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25. Describe the different dimensions on which various assessment methods differ from one another.
26. Explain why more than one data source is used in transpersonal assessment.
27. Describe difference between conventional and transpersonal research methods.
28. Distinguish between quantitative and qualitative methods of research, and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each.
29. Describe the transpersonal assessment method called “deep structural analysis.”
30. Explain why obtaining the respondent's first-person point of view of a phenomenon is crucial to understanding the nature of transpersonal experience.
31. Describe the limitations of a purely 1st person “experiential” approach to transpersonal experience.
32. Explain why the assessor's spiritual world view is central in the assessment of transpersonal experience and behavior.
33. Define *measurement error*.
34. Explain how the artificiality of psychometric measurements and laboratory experiments may be inappropriate for the study of certain transpersonal phenomena.
35. Identify and discuss the main conceptual and methodological difficulties in defining and quantifying transpersonal traits and states.
36. Identify and discuss the main differences between a conventional and transpersonal approach to psychological research and personality assessment.
37. Compare *separateness science* and *wholeness science*, as defined by Braud & Anderson (1998).
38. Explain why modern psychological science assessment as it stands today requires "a new metaphysical net" if it is to catch the meaning, function, and reality of the transpersonal dimension of human personality action.
39. Explain how transpersonal assessment can help answer questions about the field's ethical and social accountability clients and regulating agencies as well as scientific validity and treatment efficacy.

Chapter Summary

This chapter examines the nature of transpersonal psychological assessment, the methods of transpersonal research and testing, and the assumptions that underlie the assessment and evaluation of transpersonal experiences and behavior. First, the functions of transpersonal testing and assessment are identified and transpersonal assessment is defined. Second, the various methods and psychometric approaches used in transpersonality research and assessment are examined, including the use of verbal reports as data, direct observation of behavior, case studies, personal histories, life records, and standardized tests. The example of how to assess and evaluate the experience of "enlightenment" is presented to illustrate how research in this area has been conducted. A list of over 30 standardized instruments used to measure transpersonal constructs is provided and the challenges that face any researcher who seeks to define, quantify, and measure constructs such as "transcendence" or "spirituality" are discussed. Six assumptions underlying transpersonal assessment and testing are also identified and discussed: (a) transpersonal traits and states exist, (b) transpersonal states and traits can be quantified and measured, (c) various sources of evidence and multiple approaches to measuring aspects of the same trait or state are useful, (d) all assessment methods have strengths and weaknesses and various sources of error, (e) assessment can point the direction to transpersonal phenomena that require further study, and (f) transpersonal assessment can provide valuable answers to important questions. The chapter distinguishes between "states" and "traits." The advantages and disadvantages of the use of standardized tests and measures to assess transpersonal constructs are discussed. The notion that transpersonal traits and states can be quantified and measured is examined in light of Gustav Fechner's attempt to clarify the relationship between body, mind, and spirit in his formulation of the experimental science of psychophysics. The recognition that different assessment methods differ in various ways brings to light the need to use multiple assessment methods whenever investigating a particular transpersonal experience or behavior. The balanced use of both quantitative and qualitative methods is described. An example of the use of a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is presented in the work of Wilber's "deep structural analysis." Both the importance and limitations of taking a first-person point of view toward transpersonal experiences are examined. The assessor's spiritual world view is presented as also important in transpersonal assessment. The artificiality of psychometric measurements and laboratory experiments as being inappropriate to the investigation of some transpersonal phenomena is highlighted. The conceptual and methodological difficulties in defining and quantifying transpersonal traits and states are also presented. The differences between traditional psychological assessment and transpersonal approaches are discussed and the need for an expansion of assessment methods and theoretical frameworks better suited to the creativity of the phenomena under study (e.g., spirituality, peak experiences, self transcendence, and so forth) is examined.

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The Nature of Transpersonal Assessment

Functions of psychological testing and assessment. Psychological testing and assessment is a commonly accepted professional clinical practice that plays an important role in mainstream psychology by helping therapists understand and describe a client's current level of psychological functioning (i.e., diagnosis), select appropriate therapeutic treatments (i.e., prognosis), and demonstrate the effectiveness of particular treatments (i.e., efficacy studies). Testing and assessment performs all these functions in transpersonal psychology as well, in addition to helping to provide scientific verification of the validity of transpersonal theories and constructs of the human personality. What transpersonal assessment does do that ordinary, conventional approaches to psychological assessment does not is incorporate notions of spirituality and a transpersonal orientation into one's understanding of human personality function.

A spiritual or transpersonal orientation can be understood generally, without allegiance to any specific theory, as involving the perception that non-ordinary states of consciousness, especially those which take the individual beyond her/himself (i.e., transpersonal experiences) are valid, available to everyone, and have potential for creating levels of health and adjustment which include but also extend beyond traditional views of health. Examples of these types of non-ordinary states are experiences which have been labeled peak, mystical, spiritual, [trance], and religious. Furthermore, the adherence to theories (e.g., Wilber, Grof, Washburn) which incorporate these experiences into the explanation of human functioning and their application to enhance the growth and development of self-awareness and increased health of both practitioner and client constitutes a transpersonal orientation. (Friedman & MacDonald, 1997, p.110)

What transpersonal assessment contributes to assessment in mainstream psychology is the systematic application and integration into traditional assessment practices "a model of the human psyche that recognizes the importance of the spiritual or cosmic dimensions and the potential for consciousness evolution" (Grof, 1985, p. 197).

Transpersonal assessment defined. In line with convention use of the term, *assessment* can be defined as "the gathering and integration of psychology-related data for the purposes of making a psychological evaluation, accomplished through the use of tools such as tests, interviews, case studies, behavioral observation, and specially designed apparatuses and measurement procedures" (Cohen, Swerdlik, & Phillips, 1996, p. 6). Personality research can be defined as research that involves "asking and answering questions about why people act, feel, and think as they do" (Liebert & Liebert, 1998, p. 26). Transpersonal assessment and personality research would include these conventional approaches to assessment and research while also including transpersonal theory into its practice for purposes of not only "expanding our ability to understand and provide interventions to clients [but also] as a means to verify empirically the validity and effectiveness of transpersonal practices" (Friedman & MacDonald, 1997, p. 113).

Transpersonal assessment may be defined as an activity requiring professional judgment whereby the practitioner and client work collaboratively at arriving at an expanded conception of the client, including viewing non-ordinary states and both their antecedents and consequences as potentially, but not necessarily, beneficial, for the purpose of enhancing the client's growth and development of self-awareness and health. In the process of developing such an understanding of the client, the practitioner relies upon transpersonal theory in a systematic way (i.e., through the use of standardized measures of transpersonal constructs) and examines his/her potential biases as

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an essential aspect of the assessment process. . . . Thus, the main points of difference between conventional and transpersonal approaches to assessment are that the latter utilizes transpersonal theory and methodologies to understand a client, requires that the assessor and client actively collaborate, and emphasizes the explicit role of clinician awareness of potential biases in professional judgment used in the transpersonal arena. (Friedman & MacDonald, 1997, p. 112)

This definition of transpersonal assessment incorporates transpersonal theory into its description of assessment, does not exclude conventional approaches and uses of assessment data (e.g., diagnosis, treatment recommendation, prognosis, treatment evaluation), re-focuses the goals of assessment on psychological growth and development beyond that of the conventional reductionistic, problem-oriented, medical model of disease and dysfunction, and allows for the inclusion of alternative assessment and treatment methodologies that have evidence supporting their validity and clinical usefulness (Braud & Anderson, 1998; Hart, Nelson, & Puhakka, 2000; Krippner & Welch, 1992; Palmer, 1998).

Methods of Transpersonality Research and Assessment

Many different research and assessment approaches may be employed in clinical practice and the research setting to gather information about human personality and its transpersonal aspects. Interviews, questionnaires, standardized testing, behavioral observation, Physiological measurements, case studies of personal histories and life records are just a few of the many sources of information that transpersonal personality psychologists use to draw inferences about transpersonal aspects of human personality.

Verbal Reports As Data

Among the most common sources of information about transpersonal dimensions of human personality come from self-report methods such as face-to-face interviews that provide quick and easy access to a person's subjective internal experiences. Verbal reports, being a primary medium of interpersonal communication, have traditionally been a valuable source of useful data for psychologists (Boring, 1953). They aid in the prediction of behavior, correlate with physiological measurements, provide information relevant to the diagnosis and treatment of disorders, provide complementary information to behavioral observations, and suggest hypotheses for the research scientist to test and evaluate (Ericsson & Simon, 1984). Verbal reports contain enough information about the structure of thought to be translated into computer simulations of cognitive processes involved in problem-solving, for instance, and are used in courts of law as evidence under certain circumstances. Variables that affect the completeness and accuracy of verbal reports include: time of report, the kinds of information requested, failure to attend to experience, censoring or evaluative processes, task requirements, availability of automatized practiced responses, availability of verbal concepts, lying and willful deception by the subject, wording of the interview or questionnaire item, correspondence in verbal meanings of assessor and the respondent, familiarity with the interview and questionnaire format, and attitude and set of the respondent (Ericsson & Simon (1984).

Verbal reports are also difficult to interpret and are limited by an individual's verbal skills and capacity to introspect and remember (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), especially when they are in an alternate state of consciousness (Cunningham, 1986). Both perception and memory of a transpersonal experience and its concurrent or retrospective self-report will be influenced by the physical and mental condition of the individual (e.g., medication, level of arousal, fatigue and other motivational variables). Moreover, self-report measures do not provide *direct* assessment of experiences such as "spiritual enlightenment" or any other transpersonal construct but only *indirect* assessments of the correlates, consequences, and verbal expressions of such experiences (i.e., the phenomenology of the experience or "what it was *like*"). Many transpersonal experiences (e.g., mystical states of consciousness) are often reported as being ineffable or "beyond words." Self-reports are particularly limited in describing inner psychological states by what

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William James (1890/1950) called "the vocabulary of outward thing" (p. 194). There will always be a gap between thoughts and feelings and the words used to convey them. Indirect assessment techniques that are "disguised" (e.g., projective tests) may be used to bypass response bias that may distort self-reports, but responses still need to be interpreted. In this way, the clinician's or test developer's values, beliefs and attitudes comes into play to influence the interpretation of assessment results. Because transpersonal psychologists may disagree on how to interpret what a person reports, and because of the important role that the clinical judgment of the therapist plays in diagnosing and treating personality disorders, it becomes "particularly crucial for transpersonal assessors to actively examine their biases during assessment" (Friedman & MacDonald, 1997, p. 111).

Direct Observation of Behavior

A second way to learn about why people act, feel, and think as they do during exceptional transpersonal experiences and performance of transformative behaviors is to observe them directly in particular settings or situations. The situations may be contrived laboratory settings or natural field setting. Naturalistic observation may have more credibility as a source of evidence for a particular transpersonal phenomenon than observations in contrived laboratory settings because of its greater external validity, although laboratory experiments may have stronger internal validity because of it permits the researcher to manipulate, control, and measure variables of interest (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Many transpersonal experiences occur most naturally and typically in response to human needs, which is why William James' (1902/1936) *Varieties of Religious Experiences* is such a rich source of insight and understanding into dramatic forms of religious behavior and attitudes. Transpersonal philosopher Stephen Braude (1997) cogently argues that naturalistic observation is an extremely valuable source of information concerning the nature and limits and even the reality of transpersonal aspect of human personality functioning. A laboratory experiment or standardized test would not allow us to infer the nature, limits, or even existence of most ordinary human abilities if they did not manifest themselves first in the non-laboratory setting of everyday life. There are many provocative demonstrations of personality action studied by psychologists that cannot be easily removed from their naturally-occurring context (e.g., trance channeling, lucid dreaming, psi functioning, near-death experience, out-of-body experience, mystical experience). Such evidence is at least as valuable and reliable as the evidence gathered from contrived laboratory experiments or formal psychometric testing, and probably more so, because of its external validity.

Case Studies, Personal Histories, and Life Records

A third source of information about the transpersonal dimensions of human personality action can be found by studying an individual's life history and biographical record. Case studies examine the life and actions of a single individual in great detail. Like naturalistic observations, they can reveal the richness and complexity of the transpersonal aspects of human personality in a way that few other methods can. Because case study observations are not made under controlled conditions, are not directly repeatable, often come from retrospective reports with associated memory distortions, and do not allow for simple, direct comparisons across groups of people, they may not always serve as credible scientific evidence for substantiating the validity of transpersonal constructs or the effectiveness of transpersonally-oriented psychotherapies.

Most investigations [of transpersonal psychotherapy] involve case studies which are useful in demonstrating the principles and potential utility of transpersonally oriented psychotherapy as they unfold in the context of clinical work (e.g., Miller, 1993) but, at best, provide only anecdotal evidence to support the general validity and effectiveness of such interventions. (Friedman & MacDonald, 1997, p. 106)

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Nevertheless, case study material can serve as a rich source of hypotheses about transpersonal experience and behavior that can be subsequently tested with more controlled and rigorous methods such as correlational studies and experiments.

Example: Enlightenment. Consider, for example, how the case study method has been applied to the study of the transpersonal experience called "enlightenment." The experience of "enlightenment" in human personality has been characterized in the mystical traditions of the East as involving a form of heightened awareness during both waking and sleeping states of consciousness. Through advanced meditation practice, human personality can allegedly access so-called "pure consciousness" by developing a "witness" – a silently observing portion of the self that witnesses all other states of consciousness (waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep) without trying to change them (see, for example, Deikman, 1982). Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of Transcendental Meditation (or TM) defined "cosmic consciousness" operationally as the ability to maintain pure consciousness throughout a 24-hour period of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep (Roth, 1987). Is such a state of consciousness in human personality functioning fact or fiction? An advanced practitioner of Transcendental Meditation™ demonstrated enhanced awareness of dreams (called "lucid dreaming") and the ability to maintained heightened awareness in unbroken continuity throughout a twenty-four-hour cycle of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep (as operationalized by increasing EEG coherence across left and right hemispheres of the brain during both waking and dreaming states (Gackenbach, Moorecroft, Alexander, & LaBerge, 1987). Apparently,

Meditation serves to stabilize the experience of consciousness in sleep.... Meditation does contribute to the continuity of consciousness in sleep and helps to stabilize it Once an individual has reached this level, he or she may often or continually be an observer of him- or herself in the waking state. (Gackenbach & Bosveld, 1989, pp. 150-151)

This state of consciousness is also called "the Great Realization." The lucidity that this individual human personality brings into sleep causing her to "awaken" to the fact that she is dreaming is also brought into the waking state to cause her to "awaken" to the fact that her everyday waking experience is actually a dream (LaBerge, 1993).

Standardized Tests

A fourth source of information about the transpersonal aspects of an individual's personality is a psychometric test or self-report personality inventory. MacDonald, Leclair, Holland, Alter, & Friedman (1995) state that "transpersonal psychology involves not only the direct study of transpersonal experiences but also the study of the expressions and [behavioral, physiological, cognitive/emotional, sociological] correlates of this experience, a task for which psychometric tests can prove valuable. . . . Standardized measures of transpersonal constructs can be utilized effectively to support transpersonal theory" (pp. 172-173). Self-report personality inventories are essentially specialized questionnaires that requires individuals to respond to a series of items in a variety of possible formats (e.g., indicating the degree to which they agree or disagree with the statement, the item is true or false for them, the frequency with which they engage in the describe behavior, and so forth), scored on a number of dimensions or scales to reveal the "personality pattern" of a particular individual. As with all psychometric measurements in psychology, the assessment of transpersonal constructs/phenomenon must address the issues of

- reliability (test-retest, internal consistency),
- content validity (adequately operationalizing the construct in terms of the behaviors and verbalizations that truly reflect the phenomenon/ construct),

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- concurrent validity (degree to which the test score is related to some standard or criterion measure obtained at the same time),
- predictive validity (degree to which the test score predicts some other criterion measure),
- construct validity (adequately distinguishing between those who are known to have the experience and those who have not), and
- response bias (i.e., adequately distinguishing between those who have had the experience and those who have not but who say they have).

McDonald et al. (1995) identify three of the above issues as particularly important to transpersonal assessment: (a) *content validity* (i.e., the lack of agreement among transpersonal psychologists regarding the operationalization of any given construct beyond its phenomenological dimensions because of the lack of knowledge about transpersonal states of consciousness and to their inherent "ineffability"), (b) *construct validity* (i.e., how can testers empirically demonstrate that their assessment is assessing what they claim it is assessing), and (c) *response bias* (i.e., can the test distinguish reliably between those who actually have a transpersonal experience and those who don't but claim that they do?). Nelson (1989) also points out another key issue relevant to the proper selection of psychometric instruments used to assess transpersonal constructs: "Many of the older instruments of personality assessment [e.g., MMPI] were developed from psychological models based on psychopathology. . . , and there was a tendency to implicitly connect transpersonal experiences to regressive and psychotic states" (p. 195). Instruments to measure transpersonal constructs need to be used and developed that are not based upon psychological models that assume transpersonal experiences are some type of personality disorder.

Instruments to measure transpersonal constructs. McDonald et al., (1995), MacDonald, Friedman, & Kuentzel (1999), MacDonald, Kuentzel, and Friedman (1999), and Ak yalcin, Greenway, & Milne (2008) together provide a substantial survey of more than 30 self-report personality inventories designed to measure transpersonal constructs that "can potentially be used advantageously in an applied professional context as part of a transpersonal clinical assessment" and as a means of facilitating the growth of transpersonal psychology as an empirical science by their continued use in transpersonally oriented research into human personality (Friedman & MacDonald, 1997, p. 114). Rather than generate new psychometric instruments for each of the various transpersonal constructs currently in place in a host of transpersonal theories, the use of current transpersonal instruments commonly employed in research activities -- especially those whose psychometric properties of validity and reliability have been firmly established such as the M-Scale, PCI, and SWB -- can help focus attention to the development of a systematic, cumulative and ongoing research base that will organize the field as a scientific discipline.

It is now incumbent that future researchers [into transpersonal dimensions of human personality] begin to use the available tools, rather than continue to generate new ones, whenever possible. This is not to delimit serious researchers from devising new measures if there is an appropriate justification (i.e., if there is a new construct that requires measurement in order to test a theory or for some practical application). If, however, there is an existing instrument for a construct that can fit the needs of a given research project, then we strongly encourage researchers to utilize that measure since it will facilitate the cumulative progress of the field. (MacDonald, Kuentzel, & Friedman, 1999, p. 173)

Thirty existing transpersonal self-report personality inventories that can potentially guide further assessment and research into the transpersonal dimensions of human personality are listed below.

1. Assessment Schedule for Altered States of consciousness (van Quekelberghe, Altstotter-Gleich & Hertwick, 1991)
2. Boundary Questionnaire (Hartmann, 1991)

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3. Death Transcendence Scale (Hood & Morris, 1983)
4. East-West Questionnaire (Gilgen & Cho, 1979)
5. Ego Grasping Orientation (Knoblauch & Falconer, 1986)
6. Ego Permissiveness Inventory (Taft, 1969, 1970)
7. Expressions of Spirituality Inventory (MacDonald, 1997, in press)
8. Feelings, Reactions, and Beliefs Survey (Cartwright & Mori, 1988; Cartwright, DeBruin, & Berg, 1991)
9. Holistic Living Inventory (Stoudenmire, Batman, Pavlov & Temple, 1985)
10. Immanence Scale (Burris & Tarpley, 1998)
11. Index of Core Spiritual Experience (Kass, Friedman, Leserman, Zuttermeister & Benson, 1991)
12. Integration Inventory (Ruffing-Rahal, 1991)
13. Intrinsic Religious Motivation Scale (Hoge, 1972)
14. Mental, Physical, and Spiritual Well Being Scale (Vella-Broderick & Allen, 1995)
15. Mystical Experiences Scale (Hood, 1975)
16. Paranormal Beliefs Scale (Tobacyk & Milford, 1983)
17. Peak Scale (Mathes, Zevon, Roter & Joerger, 1982)
18. Personal Philosophy Inventory (Persinger & Makarec, 1987, 1993)
19. Phenomenology of Consciousness Inventory (Pekala, 1982; Pekala, Steinberg & Kumar, 1986)
20. Psychomatrix Spirituality Inventory (Wolman, 1997)
21. Religious Experiences Episodes Measure (Hood, 1970, 1973)
22. Royal Interview for Religious and Spiritual Beliefs (King, Speck & Thomas, 1995)
23. Self Expansiveness Level Form (Friedman, 1983)
24. Self-Transcendence Scale of the Temperament and Character Inventory (Clonger, Svrakic & Przybeck, 1991, 1993)
25. Spiritual Assessment Inventory (Hall & Edwards, 1996)
26. Spiritual Transcendence Scale (Piedmont, 1999)
27. Spiritual Well Being Scale (Elisson, 1983; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982)
28. Spiritual Well-Being Questionnaire (Moberg, 1984)
29. Spirituality Assessment Scale (Howden, 1992)
30. Spirituality Orientation Inventory (Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf & Saunders, 1988)
31. Transpersonal Orientation to Learning (Shapiro & Fitzgerald, 1989)

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hese tests are identified because "a) they seem to embody transpersonal constructs in a manner which minimize or eliminate a confound with religious concepts; b) they appear to be assessing unique constructs relative to other measures; c) appear to have satisfactory validity and reliability; and/or d) they have been used effectively in research" (MacDonald et al., 1995, p. 176). The interested student of transpersonal psychology is encouraged to consult McDonald et al., (1995), MacDonald, Friedman, & Kuentzel (1999), and MacDonald, Kuentzel, and Friedman (1999) for more information concerning the psychometric properties of validity and reliability of these scales. Before beginning a research project on a transpersonally-oriented topic, the student of transpersonal psychology is also encouraged to consult information resources listed in **Figure 10-1** in literature reviews of existing research involving the study of specific transpersonal topics (e.g., non-ordinary states of consciousness, psi functioning, near death experiences, out-of-body experience, mystical experiences, lucid dreaming, meditation, mediumship and channeling, health and well being and the implications of spiritual and transpersonal phenomena for therapeutic intervention).

Insert Figure 10-1 here

The challenge of transpersonal assessment. The challenge is to construct, design, and develop tests that are a meaningful, valid, and reliable as the behavior that they are intended to assess. If you scored 75 on a measure of self-actualization, such as the *Personal Orientation Inventory* (Shostrom, 1964, 1968), for example, and your friend scored 89 on the same test, what does this information tell you about how fully functioning you and your friend are or what values are fulfilled in your lives, relatively speaking? Unfortunately, very little. You would need to know much more about yourself and your friend, how the construct of "fully functioning" and "life-enriched" was defined on the self-actualization scale, the meaning of the test scores according to the test developer, and the test developer's guidelines for interpreting the test's scores. There are many different ways of looking at a phenomenon such as "self-actualization" and defining the term operationally. In different contexts, *self-actualization* carries different meanings. How wide spread are the types of behaviors presumed to be indicative of self-actualization supposed to be of a person defined as "self-actualized"? Is the understanding of the items on the self-actualization scale the same understandings as the test developer? Obviously, there are many possible items that could be used on the self-actualization test that are presumed to be indicative of the trait. How is one to decide what items (or traits) to include? Moreover, there is a complex interplay among many factors when it comes to deciding what weight is to be given one scaled item over another in its overall contribution to the trait (e.g., technical concerns, how the construct have been defined by the test developer, the societal value of the trait being assessed). It is assumed that the more items that an individual responds to in particular direction, the stronger the trait exists within the individual responding.

Assumptions Underlying Transpersonal Assessment and Testing

The issues involved in the multi-faceted process of transpersonal assessment are complex. Basic to the enterprise of transpersonal assessment are the assumptions that underlie that enterprise. Assumptions that are basic to psychological testing and assessment are a matter of substantial debate, not only within the field of transpersonal psychology, but also within mainstream psychology. Several assumptions that underlie the assessment of transpersonal constructs of human personality are briefly examined below.

1. *Transpersonal traits and states exist.*

Distinguishing between "states" and "traits." "States" are "directly available to awareness" and can be experienced (Wilber, 2006, pp. 72-73), whereas "traits" are not. Although traits are sometimes regarded as having real existence within the personality, more often than not they are simply used as verbal labels describing "any distinguishable way in which in which one individual varies from another" based on an observation of a sample of behavior (Guilford, 1959, p. 6). Traits cannot be seen, heard, touched, tasted or smelled with the outer physical senses. They are constructs whose existence we infer from verbal reports of private experience via 1st-person self-report personality inventories, interpersonal communication and conversations via 2nd-person interviews, and observable behavior via 3rd-person observations of personality actions or products of actions, including test-related responses. Traits are regarded as being more enduring, whereas states are relatively less enduring. Transpersonal assessment goes beyond simply measuring the strength or absence of some psychological trait but examines how a particular trait functions in the work-a-day world or during the performance of some laboratory task. Transpersonal assessment does not limit itself to the measurement of stable personality traits but attempts to understand transpersonal personality action and the multi-dimensional nature of human personality in the larger ecological framework in which it occurs requiring that a broad range of information be collected and new, creative evaluative tools be developed to obtain the necessary information (Braud & Anderson, 1998).

One important question in transpersonal assessment is not necessarily whether particular traits exist (e.g., spontaneity, openness to experience, self-acceptance, creativeness, capacity for intimate contact, inner-directedness, efficient reality perception, acceptance of others, and so forth), but *how* they exist and dynamically operate and develop in the human personality. For example, can a transient and time-limited

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drug-induced experience of the sacred ("state") produce an enduring and permanent religious or spiritual life (trait"? Current research suggests not necessarily (T. Roberts, 2001). "A single experience, no matter how powerful, may be insufficient to permanently overcome mental and neural habits conditioned for decades to mundane modes of functioning" (Walsh, 2003, p. 4). Major enduring life changes may occasionally occur (see, for example, the case studies of "quantum change" reported by Miller & C'de Baca, 2001), but long-term personality changes usually will require the long-term practice of some spiritual discipline, such as vipassana (mindfulness) meditation. As transpersonal psychiatrist Roger Walsh stated:

The universal challenge is to transform peak experiences into plateau experiences, epiphanies into personality, states into stages, and altered states into altered traits, or, as I believe Huston Smith once eloquently put it, "to transform flashes of illumination into abiding light." (Walsh, 2003, p. 4)

It is assumed that one type of exceptional experience and transpersonal behavior labeled with one trait term can be differentiated from transpersonal experiences and behavior that is labeled with another trait term. Taking into account the situational context in which a behavior occurs (e.g., kneeling and speaking to God in church or a public street) is important in distinguishing between trait terms that may be applicable (i.e., "religious" or "psychotic") because how a particular trait manifests itself is believed to be situation-dependent. The attribution of a trait or state to an individual or its presumed strength or magnitude is always a relative phenomenon since we are typically making an unstated comparison with respect to some hypothetical "average" person or group presumed to embody the hypothesized trait or state.

Transpersonal psychiatrist Stanislav Grof (2000) observes that the main obstacle to the study of spiritual or transpersonal experiences is not the scientific method, but traditional psychology's commitment to a materialistic, reductionistic, and mechanistic philosophy of nature and a lack of understanding of authentic mysticism based on spiritual experiences.

The great mystical traditions have amassed extensive knowledge about human consciousness and about the spiritual realms in a way that is similar to the method that scientists use in acquiring knowledge about the material world. It involves methodology for inducing transpersonal experiences, systematic collection of data, and intersubjective validation. Spiritual experiences, like any other aspect of reality, can be subjected to careful open-minded research and studied scientifically. There is nothing unscientific about unbiased and rigorous study of transpersonal phenomena and of the challenges they present for materialistic understanding of the world... In actuality, there exists no scientific "proof" that the spiritual dimension does not exist. The refutation of its existence is essentially a metaphysical assumption of Western science, based on an incorrect application of an outdated paradigm. As a matter of fact, the study of holotropic states, in general, and transpersonal experiences, in particular, provides more than enough data suggesting that postulating such a dimension makes good sense. (Grof, 2000, pp. 213, 217)

2. *Transpersonal traits and states can be quantified and measured.*

Advantages and disadvantages of the use of standardized tests and measures to assess transpersonal constructs. A number of standardized, paper-and-pencil assessment instruments have been developed and validated to measure transpersonal constructs, have been used in transpersonally-oriented research into human personality, and have the potential for furthering scientific development of the field (see, for example, MacDonald et al., 1995). While it is recognized that such measurement devices may not *directly* assess the nature of the transpersonal experience itself (which may be trans-verbal and beyond words or trans-rational and beyond logic), they do have value for assessing their behavioral, physiological,

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psychological (cognitive/ emotional) and sociological correlates, causes, effects, expressions, and outcomes. The development and use of psychometric tests also make it possible to compare findings from different studies, make it easier to replicate existing findings, help in the accumulation of empirical support for the validity and effectiveness of transpersonal theory and practice, and "promote a dynamic link between transpersonal concepts and the nomological net. . . of mainstream psychological constructs (Macdonald et al., 1995, p. 175).

Some critics of psychometric forms of transpersonal assessment have argued that "Once you have translated the world [of human personality] into empiric measurement and numbers, you have a world without quality, guaranteed" (Wilber, 1990, p. 26). Others argue that quantity has its own quality and given the difficulty in defining and measuring many of its concepts, any psychometric instrument that links a transpersonal construct to some behavior or natural language descriptor that "operationalizes" transpersonality is useful by making empirical research possible (MacDonald et al., 1995). Evidence indicates that questionnaires and surveys *can* be used to correlate the theoretical constructs of specific personality theories with particular type of transpersonal experience and self-concepts (e.g., Cloninger, Svrakic, & Przybeck, 1993; Friedman, 1983; MacDonald, Tsagarakis, & Holland, 1994). As MacDonald et al. (1995) state:

In light of the fact that there are language descriptors which have been developed to express aspects of transpersonal experience and identity (e.g., transcendental, mystical, spiritual, holy), as well as generally predictable behaviors (and behavior changes) associated with such experiences, it appears that it may be possible to develop measures of various expressions of transpersonal experience based on how the experiencers use language in describing their experience and/or in how they behaved before, during and/or after the experience. (MacDonald et al., 1995, p. 172-173)

Not everything that counts can be counted; not everything that can be counted counts. Of course, not all correlates of transpersonal personality action can be so assessed, and those that can be quantified may not be the important ones. As someone once said: "Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts." Experiences that involve the extension of the self to include other self experience (e.g., an extension of self-identity so that self-awareness can include not only one's usual self of self but independent, other self experience) possess a value or attribute that is usually lacking in ordinary behavior patterns - the quality of "timelessness." It is a quality or attribute that can be expected to be independent of and free of physical as well as clock time. This value or quality is simply beyond the boundary physical measurement. There is no physical yardstick by which such transpersonal aspects of human personality can be directly measured, even while such experiences may be a startling, valid, and memorable experience. Like any other ordinary psychological experience, it cannot be measured in those terms, even though it makes a noticeable impression upon the individual involved.

Psychophysics was Fechner's attempt to clarify the relationship between body, mind, and spirit. The resistance of some transpersonal scholars to psychometric testing is curious given the role that one of the progenitors of transpersonal psychology played the very development of the science of psychometrics itself. Gustav T. Fechner (1801-1887), acknowledged founder of the branch of experimental psychology known as *psychophysics*, in his 1851 book, *Zend-Avesta, or Concerning Matters of Heaven and the Hereafter* (Fechner, 1851; Lowrie, 1946) first described his insights concerning the possibility of measuring mental events and systematically relating them to physical one – a thesis that would eventually be published in his famous *Elements of Psychophysics* in 1860 which would launch the new science of experimental psychology (Fechner, 1860/1966). Fechner's goal was to mathematically relate inner mental states to outer physical stimuli (i.e., quantify psychological states and traits). Using Ernest Weber's work on sensory discrimination to develop his measurement scale, Fechner understood that the effect of a physical stimulus in sensation is not absolute, but depends on the ongoing amount of sensation and stimulus intensity that already exists (i.e., the amount of sensation depends on the amount of stimulation).

Fechner recognized further that all physical traits of a stimulus (e.g., lengths, brightness, loudness, weight) was itself an abstract property or quality that did not actually exist by itself, but is made measurable by directly relating it to some arbitrary mathematical unit (e.g., inches, watts, decibels, ounces). By creating the equally arbitrary measurement unit of "just noticeable difference" (JND) to measure the least amount of change in a stimulus that will give rise to a change in sensation, and giving his "mental sensation" scale a zero point defined as the "absolute threshold" (i.e., the point in stimulus intensity above which an individual experiences a sensation and below which no sensation is reported), Fechner discovered a way of "measuring" the inner perception of a JND and relating it to the physical stimuli giving rise to it.

Having worked out a scale for measuring this particular psychological state of perceived difference, Fechner proceeded to show that these inner perceptions have a direct logarithmic relationship to the external stimuli producing them (i.e., the magnitude of the perception of difference increases arithmetically 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, as the magnitude of the physical stimulus increases geometrically 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32). Physical stimuli and psychological experience had a lawful mathematical relationship to each other that could be systematically measured! A quantitative approach to the functioning of human perception could work. A human being can be conceived as a measuring instrument of psychic events just as a ruler or scale of weight can be of physical events. Fechner's demonstration that the act of assigning numbers or symbols in accordance with the empirical characteristics of objects and experiential qualities of people and events can be done in a meaningful way, led to the science of psychometrics (i.e., the measurement of psychological events), and the construction of a variety of psychological tests for measuring attitudes and abilities (e.g., sensation-seeking, intelligence, achievement motivation). The professional literature on scaling methods provides guidance on how psychological traits and abilities can be meaningfully quantified and measured (Gulliksen & Messick, 1960; Maranell, 1974; Torgerson, 1958). The whole point of Fechner's psychophysical methods (method of limits, method of constant stimuli, method of adjustment) then was to explore the nature of the mind-body relationship, and provide inductive support for what he called the "daylight view" – the idea that the whole physical universe is inwardly alive and conscious – as opposed to the "night view" that regarded matter as dead and inert, lacking in any intrinsic purpose or meaning in itself. He wished to use his psychophysical methods, not to reduce immaterial spirit or soul to material brain or to deny spirit and soul altogether, as contemporary experimental psychologists tend to do, but to clarify the relationship of body, mind, and spirit (Fechner, 1836/1992).

3. *Various sources of evidence and multiple approaches to measuring aspects of the same trait or state are useful.*

Assessment of transpersonality needs to go beyond the process of administering and interpreting a single psychological test, however. Different tools -- psychological tests among them -- would need to be used in the process of assessing the transpersonal dimensions of personal action, depending on the particular research question investigated, the individual people and circumstances involved, and other variables unique to the particular transpersonal construct under study. Assessment of transpersonality action is not something to be confined to the laboratory or to the use of psychological tests alone, in other words. "Literally, any method the examiner can use to make relevant observations is appropriate" in psychological assessment (Maloney & Ward, 1976, p. 7).

If you're working to obtain scientific data in objective terms, then you utilize the part of consciousness that analyzes exterior phenomena. If you're looking for answers about the inner nature of personality, then you must use those parts of it most familiar with the psyche. (J. Roberts, 1975a, p. viii)

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Transpersonal researchers take a multi-layered, pluralistic approach to the study of transpersonal aspects of human personality, and embrace the best of modern psychological tools from all major conventional approaches to the study of personality, including biological, behavioral, psychometric, social-cultural, cognitive-emotional, psychodynamic, and phenomenological (Braud & Anderson, 1998). By using a pluralism of assessment methods adequate to the different domains of being that it investigates, transpersonal psychology endorses *epistemological pluralism* as the best way to introduce questions regarding the multidimensional nature of human personality to scientific speculation.

To date, transpersonal disciplines stand alone in adopting an eclectic epistemology that seeks to include science, philosophy, introspection, and contemplation to integrate them in a comprehensive integration adequate to the many dimensions of human experience and human nature....Any valid epistemology (way of acquiring knowledge) is welcome. (Walsh and Vaughan, 1993a, p. 5)

It systematically attempts to include and integrate the enduring insights of premodern religion, modern psychological science, and constructive postmodern philosophy in the multifaceted process of transpersonality evaluation (de Quincey, 2002; Ferrer, 2002; Griffin, 1988, 1997; Murphy, 1992). Transpersonal assessment insists that all the diverse approaches to understanding personality action are important, possessing true, but partial insights into the nature of human personality and offers a framework in which the various assessment approaches work together instead of in opposition, and does not commit the “category mistake” (Ryle, 1949) of *reducing* interior transpersonal psychological constructs to their exterior biological, behavioral, social, and psychometric correlates (Wilber, 2000a).

Different assessment methods differ in various ways. There are many tools in the toolbox of psychological assessment, not only psychometric tests. **Figure 10-2** presents a list of various transpersonal assessment and research methods for exploring the transpersonal nature of human personality.

Insert Figure 10-2 here

Assessment methods will differ in the extent to which predictions of future behavior can be made on the basis of test scores derived, self-reports obtained, and behaviors observed (i.e., predictive validity). Transpersonal constructs and their assessment instruments will differ according to whether or not they are derived on the basis of what is known about a particular transpersonal trait (i.e., test item developed on the basis of an individual's experience of the phenomenon) or on what theory would predict to occur, and these two standpoints (i.e. empirical and rational) may not always agree. The assessment of transpersonal personality constructs can be presented in different formats (e.g., true-false, open-ended, multiple-choice, long answer interviews, focus group directed) with one format being more useful than another. Assessment methods can vary in terms of their administration, scoring, and interpretation procedures (e.g., individual or group administration; timed or untimed; machine or human scoring). Transpersonal assessment techniques will vary in terms of what they expect of the testee (e.g., recognize, recall, think and reason, verbalize, pictorially depict) in terms of representing the nature of the transpersonal experience or behavior.

Radical empiricism is encouraged. In the spirit of post-1890 Jamesian psychology and the philosophy of pragmatism, a radical empiricism is recommended in which all available scientific methodologies and tools be used to study the phenomena and pursue knowledge without bias or prejudgment and open to all intuitive possibilities. Quantitative assessment methods, by themselves, are usually not be able to adequately assess the richness and variety of transpersonal experiences. Qualitative assessment methods that provide a more comprehensive contextual description of transpersonal experience are also

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recommended to be used, for they provide different perspectives and different understanding of the experience. Convergent measures of both behavior and experience provide a more complete and accurate picture than either 3rd-person or 1st person perspectives alone. In transpersonal research, a balance of quantitative (e.g., psychometric) and qualitative (e.g., phenomenological) research methods and diverse data sources are combined and blended in order to obtain a comprehensive, rich, broad description, analysis, and presentation of the multi-leveled complexity and dynamic nature of the existential and transformative human experience under study (Braud & Anderson, 1998; Hart, Nelson, and Puhakka, 2000). Multiple data sources also clarifies interpretation of any single source to provide a more well-rounded and wholistic picture of the phenomenon under study.

Generally, in order to minimize any bias which may arise from an over utilization of any one information source, at least two modalities of information gathering are employed; in the case of conventional psychological assessments, this typically involves the use of the clinical interview and psychometric tests. (Friedman & MacDonald, 1997, p. 108)

Balance of quantitative and qualitative methods used. Quantitative and qualitative research methods and other diverse data sources are combined and blended to obtain a comprehensive, rich, broadly textured description and analysis of the multi-leveled complexity and dynamic nature of the transpersonal dimensions of human personality. Transpersonal assessment examines so-called “occult” and “paranormal” personality action using not only the traditional tools of psychological assessment (tests, interviews, portfolios, case histories, behavioral observation), but also uses expanded methods of disciplined inquiry (e.g., integrated quantitative and qualitative inquiry, hermeneutic- phenomenological research methods) to explore the provocative demonstrations of transpersonal aspects of human personality (Fischer, 2006; Romanyshyn, 2007). Transpersonal assessment does not limit evaluation of human transpersonality to psychological testing. Conventional quantitative and qualitative assessment methods usually applied to the study of human personality are equally applicable to the study of its transpersonal aspects.

The [expanded transpersonal methods of disciplined inquiry and alternative ways of knowing and working with data] are intended primarily for studying extraordinary or ultimate human experiences, such as unitive consciousness, peak experiences, transcendence, bliss, wonder, group synergy, and extrasensory and interspecies awareness... Transpersonal approaches expand the usual dimensions for studying human experience by directly employing alternative modes of awareness and intuition in the conduct of research. (Braud & Anderson, 1998, p.ix)

Example: Deep structural analysis. One example of an original transpersonal assessment is the approach taken by Ken Wilber (1977, 1980; Wilber, Engler, & Brown, 1986) who has pioneered the use of the transpersonal assessment method called “deep structural analysis.” In this method, similarities among transpersonal experiences are focused upon and differences are ignored. The common experiential qualities are theorized to constitute “deep structural” elements responsible for the underlying similarities that unite or connect the different experiences. The “deep structural elements” are then clustered and organized into a developmental sequence that provides an overarching theory of their function and relationships in human personality. Using this technique, Wilber has been able to organize and systematize a vast number of different states of consciousness into a relatively few number of “deep” personality structures. The shaman seeing power animals, the Christian contemplative envisioning angels, and the Hindu practitioner merging with her *Isha deva*, for instance, are all clearly having different experiences. Yet “at a deep structural level they are all seeing archetypal spiritual figures” (Walsh, 1993b, p. 127). In this case, seeing “archetypal spiritual figures” is a reflection of a common structural element underlying the specific forms that all mental phenomena in a particular state of consciousness may take in the human personality. It is the deep structural element that defines what, in this instance, Wilber (1980)

refers to as the “subtle stage of consciousness.” In this stage of consciousness, all mental phenomena may take the specific form of archetypal spiritual figures. Different stages of consciousness each have their own corresponding deep personality structures that are responsible for generating the common phenomena experienced while in that stage of consciousness. On the basis of this technique, Wilber has identified a small number of functional structures in the human personality underlying different states of consciousness beyond Piagetian formal operations and has *ordered and stratified* them into a developmental sequence consisting of three transpersonal stages he calls “subtle” (in which archetypal figures arise into awareness), “causal” (in which no objects or images arise into awareness), and “absolute” (in which all phenomena are understood to be creations of consciousness). Similar analyses of transpersonal assessment data highlight the effectiveness of approaching transpersonal phenomena from an objective, 3rd person point of view.

Centrality of respondent's first-person point of view. Not merely eclectic, but broadly integrative, transpersonal assessment allow equal inclusion of subjective (1st-person), intersubjective (2nd-person) and objective (3rd-person) points of view to understand the full spectrum of exceptional human experiences and transformative capacities (Braud & Anderson, 1998; Hart, Nelson, & Puhakka, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1983; Wilber, 2000b). Because both assessor and respondent must work from their own subjective experience, verbal reports of transpersonal experience from the 1st-person point of view are especially valuable in transpersonal assessment. C. G. Jung (Nagy, 1991) argued for an empiricism of direct experience. For Jung the *empirical* nature of psychic life is not to be doubted.

Without a doubt [psychic life] is our only immediate experience. All that I experience is psychic... My sense-impressions – for all that they force upon me a world of impenetrable objects occupying space – are psychic images, and these alone constitute my immediate experience, for they alone are the immediate objects of my consciousness... We are in truth so wrapped about by psychic images that we cannot penetrate at all to the essence of things external to ourselves. All our knowledge consists of the stuff of the psyche, which, because it alone is immediate, is superlatively real. Here, then, is a reality to which the psychologist can appeal – namely, psychic reality... Between the unknown essences of spirit and matter stands the reality of the psyche – psychic reality, the only reality we can experience directly. (Jung, 1934/1960, pp. 353, 384)

This emphasis upon the “experiential” character of transpersonal phenomena derives from modern origins of the transpersonal orientation in peak experiences and studies of self-actualization, and from the discipline’s efforts to bolster the validity of transpersonal knowledge claims in the attempt to appear “empirical” and thus scientific. If only valid knowledge is empirical, and spirituality is essentially a subjective experience, then concurrent, intermittent, or retrospective self-reports of one’s own inner acts of consciousness (attending, perceiving, imagining, inquiring, understanding, reflecting, judging, willing, and so forth) during non-ordinary states of consciousness would seem a reasonable approach (Cunningham, 1986).

Limitations of a purely 1st person “experiential” approach. Some transpersonal scholars believe that assessment of the “experiential” and “empirical” dimensions of personality action used as a single approach by itself can give rise to limiting and counterproductive interpretation of assessment data (Ferrer, 2002). It is hypothesized that understanding transpersonal and spiritual phenomena solely in terms of individual inner experiences *can* give rise to the mistaken belief that there exists a separate subject “having” an experience of a separate spiritual “event.” “What is called a transpersonal experience is better understood as the participation of an individual in a transpersonal event” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 126). This strong emphasis upon a 2nd-person (intersubjective) point of view and interpretation regarding

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assessment data points to the co-participation and co-creation of experience that occurs even during the assessment process itself.

Centrality of assessor's spiritual world view. The data generated may be then subjected to thoughtful integration and evaluation by both the participant *and* trained assessors. Subject and researcher are co-participants in transpersonal assessment. As the above analysis concerning first-person (intrasubjective) and second-person (intersubjective) points of view indicates, the beliefs, values, and attitude of the transpersonal assessor, clinician, and researcher provide an important heuristic context within which possible interpretations of assessment data are embedded and emerge (Friedman & MacDonald, 1997). The therapist pole of the therapist-client relationship is often overlooked in conventional approaches to assessment where the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the assessor receive little of not attention because of the assumption that "objective" therapy requires the removal of all "subjectivity" from the assessment process. Traditional clinical assessment is largely problem-oriented and theory driven where the skillful application of technique alone is emphasized. In transpersonal psychology, on the other hand, the psychologists is recognized to be a significant element in the assessment process whose interpretations of assessment data can be expected to be colored by his or her values, beliefs, and expectations. "Transpersonal psychotherapy [and assessment] recognizes the therapist's unfolding awareness of the Self and his or her spiritual world-view as central in shaping the nature, process, and outcome of therapy" (Wittine, 1989, p. 278). For this reason, the personality, spiritual state, beliefs and values of the transpersonal practitioner are an object for continual self-examination, self-reflection, and development. The therapist is expected to engage in his own spiritual practice (e.g., meditation, practice of non-ordinary states of consciousness, journaling, dream work, or other psychospiritual exercises) in order to grow professionally and personally.

4. *All assessment methods have strengths and weaknesses and various sources of error.*

No field of research is immune from methodological or conceptual problems and "errors" of measurement. Michael Nagel (1999), for instance, discusses methodological problems of subject selection in research of personality variables involved in advanced meditative states. Lukoff & Lu (1988) discuss the conceptual problems involved in the widely different definitions of transpersonal states used in transpersonal assessment.

A major problem in studying transpersonal states is the wide conceptual variability among researchers...While most researchers have related their definitions to the literature on mystical experience, particularly to the writings of Stace (1960), others have developed idiosyncratic definitions that seem to have no basis in prior writing...Progress ultimately depends on obtaining some shared agreement regarding definitions and method...[Research topics are] ripe for a meta-analysis...that would integrate both the qualitative and quantitative findings. (Lukoff & Lu, 1988, pp. 163-164, 183)

Error of measurement is not "error" per se but actually expected deviation or variability in individual responses due to natural, common, expected individual differences in personality. "Error" is a mathematical term that refers to variability due to individual subject differences in the possession of the trait under investigation. Measurement "error" refers to those expected extraneous factors (other than the trait directly being measured) that influence individual performance on or during the test, interview, case study, survey, questionnaire, and behavioral observation (e.g., respondents having the flu, degree to which test instructions are followed by testers, fatigue or practice effects on the part of both respondents and assessors). It is an element of the measurement process itself, and while it can be minimized, it cannot be eliminated and is to be an expected aspect of any assessment process, especially when one is dealing with something as dynamic, creative, and changeful as the human personality in its transpersonal aspects.

Artificiality of psychometric measurements and laboratory experiments may be inappropriate to the phenomenon under study. The artificiality of psychometric measurements and contrived laboratory experiments in the study of transpersonal dimensions of human personality -- with their tightly controlled and stilted content, format, administration procedures, scoring, interpretation procedures, and psychometric or technical requirements -- may be cripplingly inappropriate to the phenomena under investigation. For instance, personality variables and transpersonal constructs associated with near-death experiences, death bed visions, so-called ghosts and poltergeists, and claims of reincarnational memories that occur spontaneously outside the clinic are not to be dismissed or the evidence thrown away simply because of the difficulty of operationalizing the phenomena in terms that can be measured or controlled and manipulated. Psychology would be in a sorry state indeed if our only knowledge of human mind and behavior were limited to those "facts" obtained on a psychological test or laboratory setting. Given the fact that psychological testing and assessment of transpersonal constructs are originally conducted in order to study kinds of events that occur initially outside the lab, it is ironic to consider that psychologists can dismiss psychological phenomena only in connection with conditions appropriate to laboratory experimentation or formal psychometric testing and evaluation (Braude, 1997). Focusing only on *measurable* phenomena to which numbers can be assigned rules out studying transpersonal constructs that are real but unique or rare, imposing artificial limits on human inquiry and on what are considered to be "real" events of nature. Such a partial view rules out more than it includes and provides us a very impoverished view of human personality. Certainly there is a possibility of error in observation in anecdotal reports and field observations, but this possibility exists just as readily in laboratory experiments in the reading of instruments, peering through a microscope, or recording subject's responses on dependent variable outcome measures. The best anecdotal reports involve multiple, independent witnesses whose testimony agrees. Laboratory studies in psychological science also rest on the fallible activities of observation, recording, and instrument reading. Certainly not all eyewitness testimony are scientifically equal or equally admissible as good data, but courts do not rule out all human testimony, but instead put them on a continuum of evidential validity and reliability, and psychology should do the same when it comes to self-reports.

Conceptual and methodological difficulties in defining and quantifying transpersonal traits and states. Assuming transpersonal traits and states are accepted and recognized as basic realities, it is important to acknowledge that although they produce definite effects operate upon the physical world through the personality who "has" them, those traits and states do not appear "out there" in the environment as definite physical units that can be measured and weighed as one would a glass that sits upon a table. Because they do not appear in the physical environment as a physical unit, they only attain the status of "hypothetical constructs" in the psychometric literature. Although assumed to be quantifiable and measurable, hypothetical constructs such as "transcendence" and "spirituality" have been notoriously difficult to define and operationalize for a number of reasons. One reason is that most mundane experiences of daily life have the potential under the right conditions of psychological set and physical setting of becoming spiritual, transcendent, and transformative (Aldridge, 1993; Slater, Hall, & Edwards, 2001). Another set of reasons have to do with the conceptual and methodological difficulties that are involved in any attempt to define and measure nebulous and notoriously vague traits (e.g., intelligence) because the experiences from which they are derived: (a) may not be directly accessible for concurrent introspective inspection or of sufficient duration for retrospective verbal report, (b) may not be able to be distinguished, isolated, or differentiated into distinct and separable components, qualities or attributes in any effective way, (c) because they are actually a gestalt of overlapping and highly interdependent functional attributes that interact in non-linear ways that cannot be sharply demarcated from one another. We may distinguish, differentiate, and isolate transcendence, self-actualization, peak experiences, and spirituality from one another for the sake of discussion, but such verbal demarcations or conceptual boundary lines are artificial. Although there is no particular and definite line between peak experiences and spirituality, between self and spiritual transcendence, where one particular experience begins or ends,

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they must merely be discussed in such terms if we are to talk about them at all. This in no way affects the basic reality, that of the personality and its experience of transcendence, however. Researchers that have re-examined the internal validity of some scales (e.g., Self-Transcendence Scale, Spiritual Transcendence Scale, Mysticism Scale), for example, failed to replicate their hypothesized factor structure with different populations, suggesting that the names given to various "core" constructs may imply differences among traits that are simply verbal in nature and not actual (Akyalcin, Greenway, & Milne, 2008). They observe that "in the report of transcendence experiences one might not be able to separate core constructs: sacredness, interconnectedness, unity, and a higher consciousness effectively. . . [and that] transcendence as a construct needs further theoretical analysis" (p. 41).

5. *Assessment can help point the direction to transpersonal phenomena that require further study.*

It has been primarily through its efforts at integrating the psychological insights of the world's great premodern religious traditions with modern and postmodern concepts of spirituality and models of human personality currently popular in Western psychology that there has arisen an ever-growing awareness of the need for a new paradigm of human inquiry if psychology is going to provide a fully adequate understanding of the nature of human personality in all of its dimensions (Griffin, 1988; Harman, 1991). Figure 10-3 outlines some differences between a transpersonal vs. traditional approach to psychological research and personality assessment.

Insert Figure 10-3 here

"Separateness science" and "wholeness science" compared. Braud and Anderson (1998, Chapter 1) observe that the conventional view of "separateness science" and the expanded view of "wholeness science" have different assumptions about what constitutes legitimate content domains in the study of human personality action, valid types of psychological assessments, and the kinds of explanations that are appropriate for scientific knowledge of human personality functioning. Braud & Anderson (1998) maintain that quantitative and qualitative research methods appropriate for scientific knowledge under the conventional view of "separateness sciences" are *equally applicable* to the study of transpersonal functioning of human personality. New methods of human inquiry that are appropriate for scientific knowledge under the expanded view of "wholeness science" (e.g., direct knowing, dream and imagery work, meditation, creative expression, storytelling, and intuition) are "better suit the ideographic and personal nature of transpersonal experiences...and that become as creative and expansive as the subject matter we wish to investigate" (Braud & Anderson, 1998, pp. x, 4).

The need for new epistemological nets. The scientific materialism of modern psychological science as it stands today constitutes a metaphysical net, so to speak, that captures metaphysical fish of only a certain size. This notion is illustrated in the following parable attributed to physicist Sir Arthur Eddington.

In a seaside village, a fisherman with a rather scientific bent proposed as a law of the sea that all fish are longer than one inch. But he failed to realize that the nets used in the village were all of a one-inch mesh. Are we filtering physical reality? Can we catch consciousness with the nets we are using? (quoted in N. Friedman, 1994, p. 27)

"Science must change, as it discovers its net of evidence is equipped only to catch certain kinds of fish, and that it is constructed of webs of assumptions that can only hold certain varieties of reality, while others escape its net entirely" (J. Roberts, 1981a, p. 137).

6. *Transpersonal assessment can provide valuable answers to important questions.*

Is this person experiencing a psychotic breakdown with mystical features or a mystical experience with psychotic features? What is the impact of a transpersonal therapy on client functioning? How valid and useful is transpersonal theory in professional practice? What are the strengths and weaknesses of a particular individual's level of functioning? What is the most appropriate treatment modality for a particular client given his or her unique personal difficulties or personality traits? How do the personal beliefs and values of the transpersonally-oriented psychotherapist influence the course and outcome of therapy? How can assessment information be used to enhance an individual's self-awareness, physical health, and psychological well-being? The answers to these kinds of questions will have an important impact on the determination of diagnosis and prognosis of client functioning, the selection of the appropriate transpersonal psychotherapy modality, and whether the treatment can be demonstrated to be effective. Transpersonal assessment can help answer questions about the field's ethical and social accountability clients and regulating agencies as well as scientific validity and treatment efficacy. For instance, "Does any particular transpersonal construct tell us anything clinically useful in addition to what conventional theory tells us? Are there any limitations or disturbances in functioning which are most suited to transpersonal interventions, compared to other forms of psychotherapy?" (Friedman & MacDonald, 1997, p. 120).

The information that rigorous validation of both transpersonal theory and practice can provide is especially valuable for verifying the effectiveness of transpersonal therapies and in establishing the scientific credibility of transpersonal constructs and personality theories in terms of their empirical validity (i.e., the degree to which the theory is supported by evidence), comprehensiveness (i.e., the breadth of the phenomena that a theory explains), coherence (i.e., degree to which assumptions and implications of a theory are internally consistent and free of contradiction), testability (i.e., degree to which the theory can be meaningfully supported or refuted), usefulness (i.e., practical applications), and overall acceptability to clients, the larger psychological and scientific community, and society at large (Friedman, 2002).

It is important to...emphasize that psychometric testing has helped practitioners gain credibility with not only the scientific community, but also insurance companies and the legal system. In these times of economic cutbacks, health care reform, and increased involvement in legal processes, conventional psychologists are relying more than ever on psychometric test data as objective information to substantiate assessment formulations, and perceptions of treatment appropriateness and effectiveness. . . . Transpersonal practitioners and researchers must develop systematic and empirical means to verify transpersonal theory and practice if the area is to gain credibility and function as a science (Friedman & MacDonald, 1997, pp. 109, 119).

By integrating mainstream psychotherapeutic practices and research methodologies with transpersonal theory, practice, and research not only is a bridge built that connects transpersonal psychology with the ongoing developments of psychology as a science overall, but the field of transpersonal psychology is itself provided with the means of enhancing therapists' understanding of client functioning, and of empirically examining the validity and usefulness of transpersonal constructs and therapies so that they become more acceptable to mainstream psychologists (Friedman & MacDonald, 1997; MacDonald, et al., 1995).

Conclusion

Transpersonal psychology does not limit research to a particular method. Conventional quantitative and qualitative research methods usually applied to the study of everyday human experience and behavior are equally applicable to the study of exceptional human experience and creative transformative capacities. Transpersonal studies introduce new methods of human inquiry that are appropriate to the idiographic, personal, creative, and expansive nature of transpersonal experiences and behaviors (e.g., Being-cognition, vision logic, dream and imagery work, meditation, creative expression, altered states of consciousness, empathy, storytelling, intuition, integral inquiry). Non-experimental evidence remains an extremely valuable source of conformation concerning the nature, limits, and reality of transpersonal phenomena. The main obstacle to the study of spiritual experiences is not the scientific method, but traditional psychology's commitment to scientism and a narrow, limiting materialistic and mechanistic philosophy of nature (Harman & Clark, 1994). Until mainstream psychology recognizes and acknowledges the transpersonal reality of human personality, it will not have any understanding of the abilities that lie within each individual.

The fact is that while you hold limited concepts of your own reality, then you cannot practically take advantage of many abilities that are your own; and while you have a limited concept of the soul, then to some extent you cut yourself off from the source of your own being and creativity. (J. Roberts, 1972, p. 92)

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Figure 10-1. Transpersonality Assessment and Research Review (continued)

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Figure 10-1. Transpersonality Assessment and Research Review (continued)

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Figure 10-1. Transpersonality Assessment and Research Review (continued)

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OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCES

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BIOFEEDBACK RESEARCH

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- **A Brief Review of Research and Controversies in EEG Biofeedback and Meditation** (1987) by F. G. Echenhofer & M. M. Coombs. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 19(2), 161-172.

MYSTICISM

- **Transpersonal Psychology Research Review: Mysticism** (1988) by D. Lukoff & F. G. Lu. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 20(2), 161-184.

RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS

- **Transpersonal Psychology Research Review: Researching Religious and Spiritual Problems on the Internet** (1995) by D. Lukoff, F. G. Lu., R. Turner, & J. Gackenbach. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 27(2), 153-170.
- **The Diagnosis of Mystical Experiences with Psychotic Features** (1985) by D. Lukoff. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 17(2), 155-182.

Figure 10-2. Varieties of Transpersonal Assessment Methods

(Braud & Anderson, 1998)

- **Historical and Archival Approaches** – Archival data are obtained by inspecting the records and documents produced by a society recounting the activities of individuals or of institutions, governments, and other groups to check the validity of other measures, as a part of multimodal approaches to hypothesis testing, to test the external validity of laboratory findings, to test hypotheses about previous behavior, or assess the effect of a natural treatment (i.e., naturally occurring events that have a significant impact on society at large or on particular individuals (e.g., Murphy, 1980; O'Reagan & Hirshberg, 1993; Ryan, 1998a)
- **Descriptive Approaches** – To describe systematically, factually, and accurately a situation or area of interest.
 - **Phenomenological Approach** – Aims at developing a complete, clear, accurate description and understanding of a particular human experience or experiential moment (Gifford-May & Thompson, 1994; Kornfield, 1979; Patrik, 1994; Peters, 1989; VanderKooi, 1997).
 - **Phenomenological Mapping** – To categorize and compare several transpersonal experiences (e.g., shamanism, meditation, yoga) on multiple experiential dimensions (e.g., cognitive control, awareness of the environment, concentration, arousal, emotion, self-sense, content of experience) to differentiate qualities of experiences and behavioral characteristics (e.g., Carr, 1993; Walsh, 1993b).
 - **Heuristic Research** – To understand an experience from all possible perspectives by an intensive self-engagement and immersion into the phenomenon, drawing also upon the reports of others, insights from novels and poetry, dreams and other states of consciousness (e.g., Moustakas, 1990).
 - **Experiential Research Method** – Research participants write about an experience they are currently living or re-living using the first-person, present tense, using a number of related experiences to discover similarities and commonalities in the inner qualities of the experience (Casey, 1976; Walsh, 1977, 1978).
 - **Cooperative Inquiry** – Research participants are co-researchers and co-participants with the researcher who participate in all aspects of the research project - its focus, design, conduct, and interpretation of results (Reason & Heron, 1995).
 - **Participatory Research** – The research projects and identifies thoroughly with the object of research, employing compassionate and empathic consciousness, indwelling, meditating on the form of the other, tuning into the uniqueness of the phenomena being studied (Peters, 1981; Skolimowski, 1994).
 - **Content Analysis, Textual Analysis, and Hermeneutics** – Involves systematic identification of predetermined categories within a text, a careful analysis of the structure of implicit meanings within a text or record of human action for purposes of explicating the meaning of the text (Chinen, 1985, 1986; Gross & Shapiro, 1996; Weimer & Lu, 1987).
 - **Deep Structural Analysis** – By focusing on the similarities and ignoring the differences among different experiences, a common “deep structure” is posited to exist across the diverse experiences that are theorized to be responsible for the similarity among the experiences (e.g., Wilber, 1980, 1984).
 - **Narrative and Discourse Analysis** – Tries to tell the story or narrative as the participants or community of believers would tell the story, including an analysis of semantic, linguistic, or textual structure (Steele, 1993).

Figure 10-2. Varieties of Transpersonal Assessment Methods (continued)

(Braud & Anderson, 1998)

- **Developmental Approach** – To investigate patterns and sequences of growth and/or change as a function of time (Doblin, 1991; Dubs, 1987)
- **Case Studies** – To study intensively the background, current status, and environmental interactions of a given social unit: an individual, group, institution, or community. (e.g., Carlat, 1989; Deatherage, 1975; Gackenbach, Moorecroft, Alexander, & LaBerge, 1987; J. J. Miller, 1993; Ossoff, 1993; Tart, 1970; Urbanowski & Miller, 1996; Waldman, 1992; Waldron, 1998).
- **Life Stories** - Typically gathered through a series of oral reports, analyzed to find important themes or to find unique features of the life (Diaz & Sawatzky, 1995).
- **Naturalistic and Field Studies** – To observe behavior in a more or less natural setting, without any attempt by the observer to intervene in order to describe behavior as it ordinarily occurs and to investigate the relationship among variables that are present (e.g., Katz, 1973; Langford, 1980).
- **Correlational Approaches** – To investigate the extent to which variations in one factor correspond with variations in one or more factors, usually based on correlation coefficients (Hood, Hall, Watson, & Biderman, 1979; Knoblauch & Falconer, 1986; Meadow & Culligan, 1987; Thomas & Copper, 1980).
- **Interviews, Questionnaires, and Surveys** – To assess more directly the nature of people's thoughts, opinions, and feelings about a transpersonal experience. (e.g., Hughes, 1992; Jamnien & Ohayv, 1980; MacDonald, LeClair, Holland, Alter, & Friedman, 1995; Maquet, 1975; Page, Weiss, Stowers Wright, et al., 1997; Puhakka, 1998; Ryan, 1998b).
- **Causal-Comparative Studies** – To investigate possible cause-and-effect relationships by observing some existing consequence and searching back through the data for plausible causal factors (Brown & Engler, 1980; Greyson, 1993; Shapiro, 1992; Tart, 1991)
- **Experimental Designs** – To investigate possible cause-and-effect relationships by exposing one or more experimental groups to one or more treatment conditions and comparing the results to one or more control groups not receiving the treatment (random assignment being essential).
- **Quasi-Experimental Designs** – To approximate the conditions of a true experiment in a setting which does not allow the control and/or manipulation of all relevant variables. The researcher must clearly understand what compromises exist in the internal and external validity of his design and proceed within these limitations (Haimenl & Valentine, 2001; Kohr, 1977; Lu & Heming, 1987; Osis, Bokert, & Carlson, 1973; Thapa & Murthy, 1985)
- **Single-Subject Designs** – Focuses on the behavior change of a single individual in which (unlike case studies) contrast conditions are being systematically controlled and monitored (Hersen & Barlow, 1976).

Figure 10-2 Varieties of Transpersonal Assessment Methods (continued)

(Braud & Anderson, 1998)

- **Parapsychological Assessment and Design Issues** – To investigate non-sensory based information transfer, action-at-a distance phenomenon (Irwin, 1989; Rao, 2001)
- **Action Research** – To develop new skills or new approaches and to solve problems with direct application to an applied setting (Dubin, 1994; Murdock, 1978).
- **Theory-Building Approach** – To develop theories, models, and conceptualizations that attempt to integrate sets of findings or explain various transpersonal phenomena or processes, integrates and interrelates previously unrelated findings, permitting a theory to emerge directly from the data, that is, theory is grounded in the data (Boals, 1978; Leone, 1995; Tart, 1995; Washburn, 1978; Wilber, 2000b).
- **Meta-Analysis** – A statistical tool for combining statistical information across studies to obtain an estimate of effect and to compare effects between studies in order to better understand moderating factors (e.g., Honorton & Ferrari, 1989; Nelson & Radin, 2001).
- **Behavioral and Physiological Assessments** - Specialized methods and instrumentation are used for measurement to identify behavioral or physiological or correlates or outcomes of a transpersonal experience (Earle, 1981; Echenhofer & Coombs (1987); Greyson, 2000; Hughes & Melville, 1990; Murphy & Donovan, 1997).

TRANSPERSONAL APPROACHES TO RESEARCH

- **Integral Inquiry** – An array of research methods are used to describe as fully as possible the phenomena, explain the phenomenon historically or theoretically, identify causal factors for the emergence of the phenomena, and consequences on the life of the experient (Braud & Anderson, 1998, pp. 256-258; Wilber, 2000b).
- **Intuitive Inquiry** – Uses intuition, empathy and altered states of consciousness as core methods of inquiry, (e.g., Anderson, 1996; Braud, 2001).
- **Organic Research** – Inviting, listening to, and presenting individual participants' stories about important aspects of their lives, using the participants' own voices and words as much as possible, recorded and reported in the researcher's own voice as well, whose goal is personal transformation of the reader of the study (Anderson, 2001; Ring & Valarino, 1998)
- **Transpersonal-Phenomenological Inquiry** – To explore transpersonal awareness when it presents itself in awareness, and the experience is explored using empirical phenomenological research method (e.g., Valle and Mohs, 1998).
- **Inquiry Informed by Exceptional Human Experiences** – Emphasizes the tacit knowing and other forms of personal knowledge of the researcher to exceptional human experiences (i.e., unitive and mystical, paranormal, usual death-related experiences) that are studied for their own sake (e.g., Palmer & Braud, 2002; Wren-Lewis, 1994)

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Figure 10-3. Differences between Transpersonal and Traditional Approaches to Psychological Assessment

<i>Transpersonal Approach</i>	<i>Traditional Approach</i>
1. Starting point is subjective, conscious experience	1. Starting point is observable behavior (conscious experience is secondary)
2. Respect for the total experience of the person with feelings included.	2. Disconcern for feelings; more concern with biological makeup and environmental stimuli
3. The world is personalized and individualized.	3. The world is impersonal and general.
4. Individual consciousness is unique, valid and significant; worthwhile to study and creative; each of us possesses a thinking self.	4. Consciousness is relatively unimportant; external environmental stimuli or internal biological stimuli are emphasized as directing behavior, not some intentional, willful self.
5. The unconscious is dynamic, creative, personal, and the source of conscious life.	5. The unconscious is static, mechanistic, impersonal (if acknowledged at all), otherwise conscious mind (or its brain) is the source of all thoughts and behavior.
6. Verbal reports of experience are a source of valid information.	6. Facts and proofs are gained through sensorily verifiable data and objective measurement.
7. Non-materialistic (mind and body though they operate as one, are basically distinct)	7. Materialistic (mind is brain, brain like all matter is insentient).
8. Non-reductionistic (the whole is something different in quality than the mere sum of its parts)	8. Reductionistic (The whole is merely a more complex sum of its individual parts and is thus explainable in terms of its parts); reduced to drives or biological events.
9. Non-mechanistic (The natural body is organic, not a machine)	9. Mechanistic (The physical body, nature, and the universe is mechanistic, like a clock)
10. Experimenter/participant dialogue is encouraged.	10. Reduced contact between experimenter and participant is encouraged.
11. Participant's humanness and experimenter's humanness is emphasized; I – Thou relationship with openness and trust.	11. Deception and trickery upon the participant is acceptable; the It-ness of the participant is emphasized (as non-human animals such as rats)
12. Freedom and dignity, choice and autonomy of the individual is acknowledged.	12. Control and directedness of behavior by outside or inside forces beyond the power of the individual to deny
13. Open-mindedness to all areas of human experience like creativity, love, psi, religious experiences, human transformative capacities.	13. Closed to all phenomena that cannot be studied by the natural science model or in artificial experimental settings.
14. Ecological and views phenomena as they occur in natural settings as valid and significant sources of data.	14. Laboratory demonstrations are highly prized as most valid demonstrations of the truth and validity of a phenomenon.