

DEFINITIONS OF TRANSPERSONAL  
PSYCHOLOGY: THE FIRST  
TWENTY --THREE YEARS

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Recent criticisms of transpersonal psychology resulting from the attempt to make the area an APA division have highlighted the need for a clear, precise, and current definition of transpersonal psychology (Letters, 1986; May, 1986; Vich, 1986), but the difficulties in defining transpersonal psychology have existed since the beginning of the transpersonal psychology movement in the late 1960s (Lajoie, 1991; Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992). By now, however, a rich volume of literature has accumulated, including a substantial number of contributions which contain a variety of definitions of transpersonal psychology. We felt that a systematic survey of these definitions would provide a greater understanding of the field and help to generate a precise, contemporary definition of transpersonal psychology.

To arrive at such a definition, we began by studying the literature defining or characterizing transpersonal psychology cited in a comprehensive bibliography on the subject (Shapiro & Lajoie, in press). The 202 citations in this bibliography were primarily from books, chapters in books, articles in journals, and newsletters. The bibliography included only English language references, primarily from publications in the United States and Australia where most of the transpersonal psychology literature has originated. Excluded were works not focused on characterizing transpersonal psychology per se, such as works on transpersonal education, transpersonal

*a  
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volume  
of  
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has  
accumulated*

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We are indebted to Noreen R. Sato for typing assistance, and to Daniel D. Blaine, David M. Sherrill and Miles Vich for helpful comments.

therapies and pathologies, the transpersonal self, and critiques of transpersonal psychology.

*criteria  
for  
selection  
of  
forty  
definitions*

All the entries in the bibliography were studied to identify any passages containing definitions of transpersonal psychology. To qualify as a definition, one of the following criteria had to be met: (a) the citation contained one or more statements which singly or collectively offered a precise definition of the field of transpersonal psychology as a whole; or, (b) the citation contained a comprehensive characterization of the field of transpersonal psychology as a whole that could be construed as a definition. We also found five citations in the bibliography that contained material that did not straightforwardly conform to the criteria, but did qualify as a comprehensive characterization when we integrated a series of statements within the citation into a collective statement. A more detailed description of the development and application of the criteria is reported in Lajoie's (1991) work.

A chronological list of the citations we judged to contain a definition of transpersonal psychology appears in the Appendix. There were forty such citations among the 202 sources studied. Three of the definitions (Nos. 2,3, and 16) are variants of Sutich's original definition (No. 1). A majority (21) of *the* definitions originated in professional journals or newsletters of professional organizations. The remaining definitions appeared in books (12), brochures (5), an encyclopedia of religion (1), and a conference abstract (1).

The actual definitions contained in the citations listed in the Appendix are presented below, with the five integrated definitions identified by an asterisk:

#### DEFINITIONS OF TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

1. Transpersonal (or Fourth Force) Psychology is the title given to an emerging force in the psychology field by a group of psychologists and professional men and women from other fields who are interested in those *ultimate* human capacities and potentialities that have no systematic place in either "First Force" (positivistic or behavioristic theory), "Second Force" (classical psychoanalytical theory), or "Third Force" (humanistic) psychology. The emerging "Fourth Force" (Transpersonal Psychology) is concerned specifically with the scientific study and responsible implementation of becoming, individual and species-wide meta-needs, ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak experiences, B values, ecstasy, mystical experience, awe, being, self-actualization, essence, bliss, wonder, ultimate meaning, transcendence of the self, spirit, oneness, cosmic awareness, individual and species-wide synergy, maximal interpersonal encounter, sacralization of everyday life, transcendental phenomena; cosmic selfhumor and playfulness; maximal sensory aware-

ness, responsiveness and expression; and related concepts, experiences and activities (Sutich, 1968, pp. 71-78).<sup>2</sup>

2. Transpersonal (or "fourth force") Psychology is the title given to an emerging force in the psychology field by a group of psychologists and professional men and women from other fields who are interested in those *ultimate* human capacities and potentialities that have no systematic place in positivistic or behavioristic ("first force"), classical psychoanalytic theory ("second force"), or humanistic psychology ("third force"). The emerging Transpersonal Psychology ("fourth force") is concerned specifically with the *empirical*, scientific study of, and responsible implementation of the findings relevant to, becoming, individual and species-wide meta-needs, ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak experience, Bvvalues, ecstasy, mystical experience, awe, being, self-actualization, essence, bliss, wonder, ultimate meaning, transcendence of the self, spirit, oneness, cosmic awareness, individual and species wide synergy, maximal interpersonal encounter, sacralization of everyday life, transcendental phenomena, cosmic self-humor and playfulness, maximal sensory awareness, responsiveness and expression; and related concepts, experiences and activities. As a definition, this formulation is to be understood as S**U**bject to *optional* individual or group interpretations, either wholly or in part, with regard to the acceptance of its content as essentially naturalistic, theistic, supernaturalistic, of any other designated classification (Sutich, 1969, pp. 15-16).<sup>2</sup>
3. The *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* is concerned with the publication of theoretical and applied research, original contributions, *empirical* papers, articles and studies in meta-needs, ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak: experience, ecstasy, mystical experience, Bvvalues, essence, bliss, awe, wonder, self-actualization, ultimate meaning, transcendence of the self, spirit, sacralization of everyday life, oneness, cosmic awareness, cosmic play, individual and species-wide synergy, maximal interpersonal encounter, transcendental phenomenon; maximal sensory awareness, responsiveness and expression; and related concepts, experiences and activities. As a statement of purpose, this formulation is to be understood as subject to *optional* individual or group interpretations, either wholly or in part, with regard to the acceptance of its content as essentially naturalistic, theistic, supernaturalistic, or any other designated classification (Sutich, 1969, p. 16).<sup>2</sup>
4. Transpersonal psychology might be defined therefore as the psychology of ultimate or highest meanings and values, and psychologists who explore in this area must be prepared to examine all institutions and activities from the point of view of such meanings and values (Green & Green, 1971, p. 42).
5. Transpersonal psychologists are exploring a variety of human behavior and trying to bring these topics within the realm of systematic study. The topics are widely diverse but intersect in several ways. These include the following, but are not limited to them: 1) a new

image of man, 2) a synthesis of widely separated fields, 3) our impulse toward self-transcendence and spiritual growth, 4) altered states of consciousness, 5) parapsychology and psychic phenomena, 6) other cultures and their psychologies, 7) a new form of energy, 8) subjective, inner states, and 9) recent psychological discoveries (Roberts, 1975, p. 398).

6. Transpersonal psychology, therefore, is that orientation within the field of psychology which is concerned with those behaviors and experiences which are perceived to be beyond the personal concerns of social roles, identity, or individual history. The focus of transpersonal psychology attempts to study those experiences which seem to be more than just of the self, those perceptions of life and the universe which are basic to sentient beings, those feelings which express a profound commonality with all that is, and those thoughts and ideas which transcend ego considerations. It could be argued that transpersonal psychology endeavors to discover directly those basic inherent processes and to find out what experience is, what consciousness is, what energy is, etc. (Hensley, 1977 p. 3).
7. Transpersonal psychology (TP), still in its infancy, is a less systematic, pioneering approach [than humanistic psychology] exploring spiritual and somatic experiences to enhance universal awareness and inner serenity (Ryback, 1978 p. 12).
- \*8. What is transpersonal psychology?
  1. Spiritual psychology: the field of psychology concerned with mysticism and spiritual growth.
  2. A non-reductionist look at higher realms of human potential,
  3. The scientific/academic study of human potential and higher states.
  4. Metatheory; a set of attitudes that generates hypotheses and theories.
  5. Transpersonal psychology as in a sense that it is not the content that is transpersonal but the context (Frager, 1979 p. 6).
9. The transpersonal psychology paradigm says that there are experiences, states and actions that go beyond the usual boundaries of the ego personality—these include other states of consciousness such as transcendence and ecstasy, motives and altruism, love and compassion; psychic experiences that transcend space and time, spiritual experiences of enlightenment, deep self awareness, mysticism, for these are real, not pathological, and can be studied scientifically (Hastings, 1979-1980, p. 4).
- \*10. Transpersonal psychology ...

can also be viewed as a psychology of transcendence.

studies various states of consciousness and transcendent experiences and how these lead to a balanced individual, integrated in mind, body, and spirit

is concerned with experiences that go beyond the personal-experiences that will expand personal boundaries and allow one to become aware of, develop, and integrate more of one's potentialities.

studies the whole person, emphasizing a balanced integration of the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual nature of man.

centers its attention on intrapersonal experiences and the inner self of the person.

imparts a more evolved, holistic view of human possibilities, and predicts a new level of human consciousness and a "higher" human being.

chief concerns have been with studying and understanding Altered States of Consciousness (ASCs).

attempts to be a holistic, integrative approach to well-being—a synthesis of mind, body and spirit (Williams, 1980, pp. 14, 18, 53, 54, 89, 90, and 116).

11. Transpersonal psychology is concerned with the study of optimum psychological health and well-being. It recognizes the potential for experiencing a broad range of states of consciousness, in some of which identity may extend beyond the usual limits of ego and personality (Walsh & Vaughan, 1980, p. 16).
12. Transpersonal psychology is really transformational psychology (Surrenda, 1980, p. 4).
13. "Transpersonal" means "beyond the ego," so transpersonal psychology is the exploration of the unconscious to find a higher self. "Unconscious" includes both the personal and collective unconscious (Guest, 1980, p. 4).
14. Transpersonal psychology is concerned with better understanding and studying those "fully human" individuals, who operate beyond purely personal or egotistical realms. Equally important points of inquiry, however, are transpersonal moments or aspects in the lives of all people, and the development and understanding of methods and pathways for nurturing "healthy" growth in that direction. Although definitions are continually in process, transpersonal is understood by the writer to mean that domain of human functioning and motivation which extends beyond the purely personal, individual "I" or "me," which has been the primary domain of Western psychology. This "I" or "me," known as the ego self (using ego in its broadest sense) includes the roles, relationships, etc. from which we derive identity, either in an idiosyncratic sense or as a member of a social or collective group. Extending beyond the ego self, however, is what we might call the Transpersonal Self, known as that center of pure awareness that both observes and transcends ego conflict, being both independent of and unaffected by fluctuations in feelings and thoughts. As a result, this concept often leads transpersonal psychologists to

study areas beyond personal waking consciousness and subconsciousness (Boucouvalas,1981,p. 136).

15. Many definitions of transpersonal psychology exist. Some common features in them include the following ideas: that a transcendent reality underlies and binds together all phenomena, that individuals can experience directly this reality related to the spiritual dimension of human life, that doing so involves expansion of consciousness beyond ordinary conceptual boundaries and ego awareness, that such experiences have usually been defined in biased language by various religions and theologies, and that a major task of transpersonal psychology is to bring these ideas into psychological language and a scientific framework (Transpersonal Psychology Interest Group, 1982,p.1 ),
16. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* is concerned with the publication of theoretical and applied research, empirical papers, articles and studies in transpersonal process, values and states, unitive consciousness, meta-needs, peak experiences, ecstasy, mystical experience, being, essence, bliss, awe, wonder, transcendence of self, spirit, sacralization of everyday life, oneness, cosmic awareness, cosmic play, individual and species-wide synergy, the theories and practices of meditation, spiritual paths, compassion, transpersonal cooperation, transpersonal realization and actualization; and related concepts, experiences and activities (*Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 1983p, i).2
17. Essentially, transpersonal psychology encompasses an approach to psychology in which a person is viewed as a complex being rather than merely an animal, a complicated machine, or a conscious ego riding herd on an irrational unconscious. *The* main features of the transpersonal approach include: a focus on the whole person, including body, intellect, emotions and spirit; an interest in states of consciousness, including an assumption that waking consciousness is not the highest or most satisfying state; an interest in ultimate values and principles; a philosophic approach that includes not only traditional logical positivism but also phenomenology and other alternatives; an open-ended approach to human potential, with particular interest in optimal health, creativity, transformation and transcendence; and the application of these ideas to scientific research, education, business, psychotherapy, spiritual disciplines, and spiritual growth (Frager, 1983, p. 2).
18. Transpersonal psychology is concerned, directly or indirectly, with the recognition, understanding, and realization of non ordinary • mystical, or "transpersonal" states of consciousness, and with the psychological conditions that represent barriers to such transpersonal realizations (Capra, 1983,p. 367).
- \*19. Transpersonal psychology ...

suggests at once a new and an ancient vision of reality.

is a psychology that honors all the world's great spiritual traditions

and their mythic portrayal and appreciation of the divinity of each human being—the inner Self. extends our sense of human development to include intuitions of our essential nature and its realization, is a psychology that comprehends the figural events of our individual lives by remembering, as context, the very ground of existence. explores how the wholeness of humanity, past and present, affects us and how an unchanging reality, the absolute, manifests in our thoughts and actions. calls our attention to a state of consciousness that enables some human beings to experience reality in ways that transcend our ordinary "personal" perspectives. acknowledges the possibility of going beyond the limited outlook of everyday awareness. learns from those individuals capable of sharing their evolved state and teaches others how to launch forth on the transformative journey (Mann, 1984, pp, viii-ix),

20. What truly defines the transpersonal orientation is a model of the human psyche that recognizes the importance of the spiritual or cosmic dimensions and the potential for consciousness evolution (Grot, 1985,p, 197).
21. All of these disciplines (and those like them) reflect themes and variations on what has come to be called the "perennial philosophy." And, as such, they typically include the following premises, premises that can be thought of as defining any psychology or philosophy as transpersonal: 1) that a transcendent, transconceptual reality or Unity binds together all apparently separate phenomena whether these phenomena be physical, mental, or spiritual; 2) that the ego or individualized self is not the ground of human awareness but rather, only one relative reflection or manifestation of a greater transpersonal (as "beyond the personal") Self or One (I.e., pure Consciousness without any object); 3) that each individual directly experiences this higher order reality which is related to the intuitive and spiritual dimensions of human life; 4) that this experience represents a qualitative shift in one's mode of experiencing and involves the expansion of one's mind and sense of self beyond ordinary conceptual thinking and ego awareness (i.e., mind is not Consciousness); and 5) that this experience is self-validating (VaUe & Harari, 1985,p. II).
22. Transpersonal psychology defined ... we seek to investigate reports and conduct studies of certain perceptual/experiential phenomena that include the full spectrum of states of consciousness and reports of transcendent experiences and the exploration of the assumption that these experiences are a function of a potential for human development which encompasses and extends the ordinary limits of the ego and personality.

Transpersonal psychologists seek to develop theoretical models that might contribute to an understanding of the phenomena in question and, at a deeper level of analysis and reflection, to explore the

philosophical implications of such phenomena. We wish to study states of optimal psychological health and well being and to apply the findings to psychotherapy, healing and education as well as other emerging fields (Harari, et al., 1986,p, 1).

- \*23, One approach is to define transpersonal psychology as the scientific study of behavior and experience within the framework of an assumed intelligent entity beyond the human species or other life forms.

Another definition would state that transpersonal psychology is the scientific study of reports of transcendent experience. One can define transcendence as moving beyond one's ordinary constructs of ego identity or as psychological functioning that goes beyond ordinary levels of experience,

A third approach is to define the field in operational terms. Transpersonal psychology is the scientific study of highly valued reports of mental imagery and attentional self-regulation, their physiological correlates, and their applications to education, counseling, and psychotherapy (Krippner, 1987,pp,4-5).

- 24, Transpersonal psychology emerged as a movement devoted in part to *the* study of alternative states of consciousness. Though by no means representative of the mainstream of psychological research in the West, transpersonal psychologists are intrigued by the possibility that human beings possess transcendent powers of consciousness. Some speculate about the mind's untapped potential for awareness and hold a view of the universe as conscious and purposive. They are convinced that we can be motivated by broader and less selfish impulses than physiological needs and egoistic emotions. For these psychologists, our most important motivations spring from selflessness that revolves around the pondering of ultimate questions-c-questions about the meaning, purpose, and value of human life. Often influenced by the recent influx of Eastern psychologies into the West, transpersonal psychology seeks to reverse what it considers the disproportionate attention given to man's psychological afflictions at the expense of his great potentialities. This movement may be understood as an attempt to reconnect the science of psychology with the perennial metaphysical teachings of spiritual traditions (Needleman & Eisenberg, 1987, p, 57).
- 25, Transpersonal psychology investigates the evolution of consciousness and experiences which lie beyond the personal, including the highest visions, goals and aspirations of human beings. This discipline integrates knowledge and insights from Western as well as Eastern psychological and spiritual approaches. **It** recognizes and studies the place of unity at the core of every spiritual tradition and seeks to apply these insights to gain new perspectives in fostering human growth and creativity and in dealing effectively *with* the challenges of today (Institute Of Transpersonal Psychology, received 1987, unpaginated).

\*26. Transpersonal psychology is ...

the psychology of health and human potential which defines the individual as being in a process of development toward full humanity as exemplified by great men and women.

the psychology that does not see the human personality as an end in itself; personal history and resulting conditioning are seen as the crust of a skin covering our transpersonal essence.

a psychology of human development, extending object relations by pointing to the next stages of human development wherein there is dis-identification from one's personality or personal identity and recognition of object impermanence or transiency.

an approach to the whole person.

is a psychology that goes *through* the personal to the transpersonal, a process of working through our humanity in an inclusive way to reach the recognition of the divinity within.

the future norm in psychology as yet unrecognized by the mainstream, inclusive and building upon the first three forces in psychology.

a psychology that recognizes and studies the different states and stations of consciousness.

is a return to the perennial philosophy as identified by Aldous Huxley. is depth psychology.

the simplest definition of transpersonal psychology is spiritual psychology; it recognizes that humanity has both drives towards sex and aggression *and* drives toward wholeness, toward connecting with and experiencing the divine (Hutchins, 1987, pp. 9, 12).

27. Transpersonal psychology is the study of human nature and development that proceeds on the assumption that human beings possess potentialities that surpass the limits of the normally developed ego. It is an inquiry that presupposes that the ego, as ordinarily constituted, can be transcended and that a higher, transegoic plane or stage of life is possible (Washburn, 1988, p. v).

28. Transpersonal psychology: an approach founded and introduced within *humanistic psychology* by Abraham Maslow in the 1960s, which seeks to incorporate human spirituality into a comprehensive model of human nature and its potential. Also known as the Fourth Force (Hoffman, 1988, p. 342).

29. Transpersonal psychology represents the application of psychological principles to the traditional subject matter of the spiritual and religious disciplines (Davis, 1988, p. 6).

30. Recognizing various modes of knowing, the transpersonal perspective is concerned with full human awareness, the integration of psychological and spiritual experience, and the transcendence of self (Association for Transpersonal Psychology, undated, received 1988, page facing p. I).

31. Transpersonal psychology is the branch of psychology that studies

spiritual, peak, and transcendent experiences and their relationship to the whole human being ... it maintains that the scientific study of the "ultimate" dimensions of humanity provides the most comprehensive means of understanding human nature (Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, 1989,p. 2).

32. Transpersonal psychology is concerned primarily with those aspects of human experience and behavior that lie beyond the personal, interpersonal, and social aspects studied in other psychological schools. I see the study of consciousness and its transformations as the central content area for transpersonal psychology (Metzner, 1989,p. 329).
33. This survey of transpersonal psychology focuses on three major domains-the psychology of personal development, the psychology of consciousness, and spiritual psychology. These three main areas overlap to form *the* field of transpersonal psychology (Frager, 1989, p.289).
34. Transpersonal psychology has emerged in the past twenty years as the extension of psychological studies into consciousness, spiritual growth, body-mind relationships, and personal transformation ... the field draws on a *rich* diversity of scholars in psychology and spirituality ... it assumes that spiritual levels and awareness are genuine, and if nurtured and developed, can transform an individual's life, leading to deeper self-understanding and greater health of body and mind (Institute of Transpersonal Psychology brochure, received May, 1990, unpaginated).
35. The transpersonal orientation was characterized as representing the "farther reaches of human nature." Dealing with what are referred to as higher levels of consciousness, this perspective draws on ancient and modern philosophies, East and West, and emphasizes the role of spirit in human development and behavior as a crucial third element added to mind and body. It has been characterized as dealing with phenomena that transcend the ordinary limits of ego, time and space (Harari, 1990,unpaginated),
36. Transpersonal psychology: loose comprehensive term for various approaches to self-actualization that direct the individual to the "deep self," stressing universal concerns and the exploration of inner creative potential (Lash, 1990,p, 390).
37. Transpersonal psychology builds on the Western psychologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *integrating* insights and wisdom from the major spiritual traditions. Transpersonal psychology maintains that the scientific study of the "ultimate" dimensions of human experience provides the *most* comprehensive means for both understanding human nature and for helping people develop their full potential (Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, received April, 1991,unpaginated).
38. The emerging field of transpersonal psychology refers to both a content area and an approach to the *study* of psychology. Many

transpersonal psychologists believe that the ego or self is a useful fiction. For these psychologists, ego formation is an important stage in development, but in later developmental stages this illusion of separateness can be transcended, and more globally encompassing modes of consciousness are possible. It is in such "trans-personal" states, some suggest, that our "moments of excellence" are achieved; these are states that many great religious and artistic figures have been familiar with. Most transpersonal psychologists find their philosophical roots in three sources; existential-phenomenological psychology; quantum, relativistic, and holonomic paradigms emerging from physics; and, the psychology and philosophy of traditions from Asian, African, and Native American cultures.

Transpersonal psychologists attempt to understand the full range of human functioning by studying experiences which are not normally studied by non-transpersonal psychologists, including reports of near-death experiences, past life regressions, psi phenomena, and altered states of consciousness such as meditative, trance, or mystical experiences. In addition, they conduct research and write regarding content areas which are more "typical" for psychology, such as human development, stress, addictions, family systems, psychopathology, etc. (Editor. 1991,p.7).

39. The published literature, my own thinking, and a number of discussion groups lead me to suggest the following as core characteristics of the field:

constructed consciousness  
 valid alternate states of consciousness  
 superiority of some alternate states  
 de-automatizing for consciousness change  
 consciousness disciplines in religions  
 genetic motive for consciousness growth  
 cosmic unity  
 cosmic flow  
 interdisciplinary study of personality  
 (Tisdale, 1991, p.5).<sup>3</sup>

40. The aim of transpersonal psychology, then, is to give a psychological presentation of the perennial philosophy and the Great Chain of Being, fully updated and grounded in modern research and scientific developments. It fully acknowledges and *incorporates* the findings of modern psychiatry, behaviorism, and developmental psychology, and then adds, where necessary, the further insights and experiences of the existential and spiritual dimensions of the human being (Wilber, 1991, p. xi).

#### ANALYSIS OF THE DEFINITIONS

*The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* Statement of Purpose and definition, No.3. and its variants was the most frequently cited or quoted definition in the bibliographic database (e.g., Allan, 1985;

Editor, 1990; Harari, 1981; May, 1986; Mintz, 1983; Roberts, 1986; Shapiro, 1982; Sundberg & Keutzer, 1984; Tageson, 1982; Tart, 1988; Toomin, 1972; Valle, 1989; Vich, 1983; Walsh & Vaughan, 1980; Williams, 1980}. Even after 1983, when the *Journal* ceased to publish the Statement of Purpose and definition, it continued to be quoted or cited (e.g., Editor, 1990; May, 1986; Roberts, 1986; Tart, 1988; Valle, 1989). In addition, various words or phrases from the *Journal* definition appear in other definitions as well.

The most frequently found themes, occurring fifteen or more times in the different definitions of transpersonal psychology (N = 37),<sup>4</sup> were:

1. States of consciousness.
2. Highest or ultimate potential.
3. Beyond ego or personal self.
4. Transcendence.
5. Spiritual,

*themes  
occurring  
fifteen  
or  
more  
times*

These themes in the definitions of transpersonal psychology collectively provide a comprehensive overview of the field of transpersonal psychology as a whole, and were useful in our synthesizing a new definition of transpersonal psychology.

The following group of themes occurred less frequently in the definitions, but at least five times: transpersonal experience; cross-cultural (Asian, East/West); inner states; unitive consciousness; holistic; transformation; mystical, mysticism. Among this group of themes, we felt that "unitive consciousness" should be included in our new definition because this general theme was also implicit in many other definitions.

Finally, a wide variety of themes occurred infrequently or only once; for example, religion; new image of man; synthesis of fields of study; parapsychology; psychic; energy, force; deep self; universal awareness; ecstasy; compassion; openness; intuition; ground of being; expanded awareness; perennial philosophy or psychology; Divinity, God; metaphysical; meditation; and "farther reaches of human nature."?

#### A DEFINITION OF TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Based upon studying all the 202 original citations, and the compilation and analysis of the corpus of previous definitions, we offer the following statement as a precise and contemporary definition of transpersonal psychology:

Transpersonal psychology is concerned with the study of humanity's highest potential, and with the recognition, understanding, and realization of unitive, spiritual, and transcendent states of consciousness.'

The proposed definition is also a succinct integration of the major themes that have characterized the field of transpersonal psychology.

The present study was a retrospective, analytical approach to defining transpersonal psychology based upon a large corpus of existing transpersonal literature. We hope that reflecting upon both the proposed definition and the compilation of previous definitions, will contribute to creating a clearer and more consensual understanding of transpersonal psychology.

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APPENDIX

A CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING OF THE CITATIONS  
WITH DEFINITIONS OF TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

1968-1972

1. SUTICH, A. I. (1968). Transpersonal psychology: An emerging force. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 8(1), 77-78.
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1973-1977

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1978-1982

7. RYBACK, D. (1978, August). Humanistic/ transpersonal: Another perspective. *Association for Humanistic Psychology Newsletter*, p.12.
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- \*23. KRIPPNER S., (1987, January). Viewpoints on transpersonal psychology. *PDTP News* [Newsletter of the Proposed Division of Transpersonal Psychology in the American Psychological Association], pp. 4-5.
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- \*26. HUTCHINS, R. (1987, July). Ten simple ways to explain transpersonal psychology. *PDTP News* [Newsletter of the Proposed Division of Transpersonal Psychology in the American Psychological Association], pp. 9, 12.

1988-1991

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*Note.* The page numbers cited in this Appendix refer to the actual page(s) where the definition appeared. An asterisk precedes the five integrated definitions. The chronological divisions in the table are arbitrary insertions to help legibility.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Six additional citations appeared in the published version.

<sup>2</sup>Generally, variants of a given definition are not included. However, because of their historical importance, and for purposes of comparison, we include four important variations, namely, Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 16. Differences among the four

versions of the definition of transpersonal psychology are described in Lajoie (1991, see Chapter 3).

<sup>3</sup>We have only listed the core characteristics here; each is discussed in more detail by the author.

"Only definition No.2 was included in this analysis and not its variants (Nos. 1,3, and 16) so that the analysis of the frequencies would not be distorted.

<sup>4</sup>A phrase that originated with Maslow (1969).

<sup>5</sup>The phrase "recognition, understanding, and realization" comes from the definition by Capra, No. 18, (1983).

<sup>6</sup>Although the concept of "beyond ego or personal self" was among the most frequently found themes in the definitions, we did not include it as an explicit phrase in our definition because the concept can be encompassed within the phrase "transcendent states of consciousness" (e.g., see Krippner's definition, No. 23), and because the meaning of "beyond ego" has been interpreted in different ways both within classical spiritual traditions and within modern transpersonal psychology.

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