

# TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY IN CONTEXT: PERSPECTIVES FROM ITS FOUNDERS AND HISTORIANS OF AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY

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*ABSTRACT:* This article provides a summary of perspectives regarding transpersonal psychology's relationship to mainstream American psychology. Founders of transpersonal psychology and historians of American psychology addressed the following questions: (a) How well known is transpersonal psychology?, (b) Is transpersonal psychology considered a subdiscipline of American psychology?, (c) Can transpersonal psychology be described as the fourth force in American psychology?, (d) What impact has transpersonal psychology had in mainstream American psychology, and why?, and (e) How might transpersonal psychologists participate in the activities of mainstream American psychology today?

## INTRODUCTION

On September 14, 1967 at a Unitarian church in San Francisco then-president of the American Psychological Association, Abraham Maslow, predicted the emergence of a "fourth force" in American psychology (Sutich, 1976). This force was inspired by social and political changes happening in the United States during the 1960s (Moss, 1999; Taylor, 1999). The civil rights, women's and counterculture movements of the 1960s stemmed from a deep dissatisfaction with, and questioning of, the socially and politically conservative atmosphere of the 1950s. Through music, art, politics, and social experimentation, Americans protested the oppression of minorities, the use of military force in solving international conflicts, and the more subtly perceived social repression of disenfranchised youth (Goffman & Joy, 2004; Woods, 2005). Oppressed black, as well as privileged white, youth banded together to create a free and open society. Organizations like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) encouraged young people to exercise their rights as citizens of a democracy and express themselves through political activism and free speech. Women were also finding their voices as democratic agents, ushering the women's liberation movement into the mainstream (Echols, 2002). These political expressions translated into an increased awareness of the power to think, feel, and act outside the bounds of traditional American culture.

In parallel to the sociopolitical changes taking place in the 1960s, individuals also began exploring the power to alter their inner worlds (Goffman & Joy, 2004; Stevens, 1987; Walsh & Grob, 2006). Psychedelics found their way to college campuses, not only as extracurricular diversions, but also as subjects of

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research. Harvard professors Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert suggested that just as people should have the right to free speech, they should also have the right to control their own consciousness. Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters organized “acid tests,” which were rock and roll concerts performed while the audience ingested LSD. Psychedelics, in turn, affected art, music, culture, and science, influencing a period of discovery. Additionally, some individuals who ingested psychedelics tended to turn to spiritual practices that would help support and explain their psychedelic experiences (Walsh & Grob, 2006).

Thousands of Americans turned to the more esoteric religions of the Mid-East and traveled to Asia where they explored spiritual alternatives to the Judeo-Christian religions of American society. Moreover, spiritual teachers from Asian cultures visited the United States, offering dharma talks, teaching meditation, organizing spiritual communities, and initiating thousands of Americans in the rites and rituals of various Hindu and Buddhist practices and theology (Fields, 1992; Gitlin, 1993; Needleman, 1972). These spiritual traditions seemed to resonate best with ideas of consciousness expansion and liberation, thus becoming the foundation upon which many Americans established a committed spiritual path.

As Americans explored and expanded their inner worlds, some psychologists became interested in the phenomenology of consciousness change. However, the prevailing psychological models of the time – behaviorism and psychoanalysis – were inadequate to fully describe the expansive experiences being had by Americans taking psychedelics and practicing yoga and meditation. Thus, when Maslow predicted the emergence of a “fourth force” (psychoanalysis, behaviorism, and humanistic were the other “three forces”) he was declaring the need for a psychological school or theory that could aptly describe, chart, and make use of, the interior domains of consciousness. Some psychologists attempted to explain the nature of these experiences within the context of existing psychological models (Fadiman, 1981). Others were left wondering if reports of so-called transcendence were indications of higher states of consciousness or actually signs of impending psychosis (Sanella, 1976).

Humanistic psychologist Anthony Sutich (1976) suggested that the transcendent experiences were in fact indications of humanity’s capacity to not only experience, but to also induce, higher states of consciousness. Sutich’s experience as a psychotherapist led him to conclude that human beings shared an identity greater than the sum of their individual egos. Perceiving the need for a psychological perspective that would adequately explain the nature and function of various transcendent phenomena, Sutich, and A. H. Maslow, launched what came to be known as a “fourth force”, *transpersonal*, psychology. Sutich saw transpersonal psychology as less of a force and more as an orientation or perspective, and offered the following definition to inaugurate the field:

Transpersonal psychology 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 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 self humor and playfulness, maximal sensory awareness, responsiveness in expression; and related concepts, experiences, and activities. (Sutich, 1969)

Sutich and Maslow laid the foundation for transpersonal psychology to become its own independent area of study via the founding of *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology (JTP)* and its supporting membership organization the Association of Transpersonal Psychology (ATP). With the publication of *JTP*, individuals interested in higher states of consciousness and transcendent phenomena were able to share their research with a community of like-minded scholars. Studies that rarely appeared in the existing psychological literature (such as those on meditation, psychedelics, near-death experiences, mysticism, peak experiences, and the development of higher levels of consciousness) were commonplace in *JTP*.

Much has changed in America since the 1960s political and countercultural movements took place, yet the 60s continue to influence America's cultural, political and social domains (Echols, 2002). Forty years following Maslow's prediction of an emerging fourth force, transpersonal psychologists are conducting research, practicing psychotherapy, teaching in universities, publishing in journals, and are otherwise active not only in the United States, but in many other countries. Degree programs in transpersonal psychology exist in a number of universities and professional schools (e.g., Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Saybrook Graduate School, Naropa University, California Institute of Integral Studies, John F. Kennedy University, and State University of West Georgia); yearly conferences on transpersonal psychology are held both in the United States and other nations; and numerous books have been published on transpersonal psychology and its applications. Indeed, transpersonal psychology has emerged as an independent area of study and practice that continues to attract individuals around the world.

Nevertheless, it is unclear how much impact transpersonal psychologists have had in the larger context of mainstream American psychology, the discipline out of which it emerged. The American Psychological Association (APA) and most academic institutions have not yet recognized transpersonal psychology as an approved area of study; transpersonal psychology is rarely mentioned in mainstream academic journals or textbooks; and relatively few American academicians identify themselves as practitioners of transpersonal psychology. Furthermore, transpersonal psychology is scarcely mentioned, if at all, in history or introductory psychology texts. Perhaps this situation parallels a larger cultural dismissal of 1960s liberalism. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons why what was at one time seen by an APA president as a "force" in psychology has not been fully integrated into the domain of mainstream psychological science.

Given this history, it is reasonable to ask whether or not transpersonal psychology has lived up to its initial identification as a “fourth force” in American psychology. It is questionable if transpersonal psychology has had the impact that Maslow, Sutich, and others hoped it might. Is transpersonal psychology considered an integral aspect of the American psychological tradition? Or is the field seen as irrelevant to American psychologists?

This article addresses the above questions through the views of two groups of professionals: founders of transpersonal psychology and historians of American psychology. The views of these individuals are surveyed and examined in order to provide a dialogical exploration of transpersonal psychology’s placement in the historical and current context of American psychology. The contributors to this study were asked to respond to the following five areas of concern: (a) How well known is transpersonal psychology?, (b) Is transpersonal psychology considered a subdiscipline of American psychology?, (c) Can transpersonal psychology be described as the fourth force in American psychology?, (d) What impact has transpersonal psychology had in mainstream American psychology, and why?, and (e) How might transpersonal psychologists participate in the activities of mainstream American psychology today? (Ruzek, 2004)

This research was conducted to lay a foundation for further explorations of transpersonal psychology’s status and relevance within the context of mainstream American psychology.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

Two groups of individuals participated in this study: the founders of transpersonal psychology and historians of American psychology.

*Founders of Transpersonal Psychology.* The first group of participants included transpersonal psychologists selected based on the following criteria: (a) peer recognition as a founder of transpersonal psychology, and (b) professional participation in transpersonal psychology for a minimum of 20 years.

In order to determine how well-recognized an individual was as a founder of transpersonal psychology, he or she was nominated by his or her peers as being one of the most influential figures in transpersonal psychology’s history. The nomination process took place through the distribution of an email, which asked the recipients to respond to the following prompt: *Please list 10 living transpersonal psychologists who you think most greatly influenced the development of transpersonal psychology.*

Forty-two individuals serving as faculty at transpersonal institutions, teaching classes with transpersonal themes, or serving on the board of directors of a transpersonal association were contacted. Twenty-four individuals (57%)

TABLE 1  
*Participant Group 1: Founders of Transpersonal Psychology (N = 15)*

Nominee	First transpersonal publication	Decade of initial participation
Ram Dass	1970	Did not participate in study
James Fadiman	1970	1960s
Robert Frager	1974	Did not participate in study
Stanislav Grof	1972	1960s
Stanley Krippner	1972	1970s
Ralph Metzner	1980	1970s
Claudio Naranjo	1978	Did not participate in study
Huston Smith	1966	1960s
Charles Tart	1969	1960s
Frances Vaughan	1979	1960s
Miles Vich	Editor of <i>JTP</i> since 1975	1960s
Roger Walsh	1979	1970s
Michael Washburn	1978	1970s
John Welwood	1976	Did not participate in study
Ken Wilber	1975	1970s

responded to the above prompt. The names of nominees appearing with the most frequency were then included in the study as “founders of transpersonal psychology.” Fifteen, as opposed to 10, top nominees resulted because some names tied for receiving the most nominations.

The second criterion used to determine status as a founder of transpersonal psychology was that the individual had to have made a minimum of a 20-year contribution to the field. This criterion was judged using two measures: (a) The individual had to have published an article in *JTP* or published a book with a transpersonal theme as early as 1983, and (b) Each participant had to have attested to being professionally active in the field of transpersonal psychology for at least 20 years. Having been cited in the PsychInfo database during 1983 or earlier validated the first criterion. The second measure was taken by asking those who agreed to participate in the study how long he or she had been professionally active in transpersonal psychology.

Table 1 lists the 15 nominees and indicates 4 individuals who could not be reached to participate in the study. Table 1 also shows the year when each individual first published an article in *JTP* or published a book with a transpersonal theme. Finally, Table 1 lists the decade that each of the participants in the study indicated as when they became involved in transpersonal psychology.

*Historians of American Psychology.* The second group of participants included psychologists who are experts on the history of American psychology. To be considered an expert in this area the individual must have been a current or past president of either APA’s Division 24: Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology or Division 26: Society for the History of Psychology or he or she must be serving, or have served, as Editor, a member of the Editorial Board, or Consulting Editor of the *History of Psychology (HP)* journal, the *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences (JHBS)*, or the *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology (JTPP)*. These APA Divisions and journals were

TABLE 2  
*Participant Group 2: Historians of Psychology (N = 9)*

Historian	Affiliation
John Burnham	Past Editor, <i>JHBS</i>
Blaine Fowers	Consulting Editor, <i>JTPP</i>
Kenneth Gergen	Past President, Division 24
David Leary	Consulting Editor, <i>HP</i> journal
Jack Martin	Past President, Division 24
James Pate	Current President, Division 26
Brent Slife	Editorial Board, <i>JTPP</i>
Michael Sokal	Editor, <i>HP</i> journal
Hendrika Vande Kemp	Past President, Division 26

chosen because they take as their interests the historical, theoretical, and philosophical dimensions of psychology.

Presidents are elected by members of a division based on their contribution to a field and their ability to maintain a broad perspective on that field. Editors of journals are “gatekeepers” of information and have broad-based knowledge with regard to past, present, and potential intellectual and social trends within a field. Therefore, presidents and editors affiliated with the philosophical and historical branches of psychology were deemed as able to take a broad-based view of psychology and offer a cogent perspective on the history of psychological systems.

A total of 23 presidents and editors were contacted and asked to participate. Nine agreed to participate. These individuals and their affiliations are presented in Table 2.

### *Confidentiality*

Because this is a historical study, there was no requirement to keep the respondents’ names and responses confidential. However, one participant in the historians of psychology group asked that his or her responses not be identified. This person did consent to being listed as a participant in the study. Therefore, this person is included on the list of participants, but is not identified in the presentation of the results. Because one person wanted his or her responses to be kept anonymous, all of the historians’ responses were kept anonymous. In order to maintain the historians’ anonymity, the researcher assigned each historian a code name (e.g., Historian A, Historian B, etc.).

### *Procedure*

*Instruments.* Participants were asked to address the following five areas of concern through the use of a semi-structured interview: (a) How well known is transpersonal psychology?, (b) Is transpersonal psychology considered a subdiscipline of American psychology?, (c) Can transpersonal psychology be described as the fourth force in American psychology?, (d) What impact has

transpersonal psychology had in mainstream American psychology, and why?, and (e) How might transpersonal psychologists participate in the activities of mainstream American psychology today? (Ruzek, 2004)

*Interviews.* Each participant was contacted via email, phone, or letter and asked to participate. Ten of the interviews with the founders of transpersonal psychology were conducted in person and one was conducted via email. These interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours. Eight of the interviews with the historians of psychology were conducted over the phone and one was conducted via email. These interviews lasted between 15 and 45 minutes.

## RESULTS

The responses to the five areas of concern are presented below. The quotes chosen for this article were selected from over 350 pages of interview data. Because of obvious space limitations, only those quotes that are most representative of each individual's or the groups' overall perspective on a given issue are included here. It should be further noted that the transcript quotes were modified as minimally as possible. Every step was taken to preserve the integrity of each individual's statements. Occasionally, however, it was necessary to alter the tense or to specify ambiguous references. These alterations are noted through the use of brackets and ellipses.

### *Concern #1: How Well Known is Transpersonal Psychology in the History of American Psychology?*

In order to address the first area of concern the historians were asked if they had heard of transpersonal psychology before being contacted to participate in the current study. Out of the nine historians interviewed, eight had heard of transpersonal psychology prior to being asked to participate in the study. The range of knowledge varied, however, as indicated below.

Historian B had very little familiarity with the field and said, "Until about a year or two ago, I had no idea what the two-word phrase 'transpersonal psychology' meant." This same historian then attempted to give a definition of transpersonal psychology, describing it as "analogous to what previous generations thought of as the psychological research of parapsychology and spirituality." Another historian with limited knowledge of transpersonal psychology said, "Basically, I'm very naive about it ... I have not read any transpersonal psychology and, consequently, I probably am best described as ignorant" (Historian D).

The rest of the historians, besides the one who had not heard of the field at all, exhibited more familiarity with transpersonal psychology. Historian H said, "I [have] not read what I would call [the] more exotic fringes, like [Stanislav] Grof ... but I've ... learned about [Grof's] work and Ken Wilber, partly through friends of mine and partly through a student who was very excited about

transpersonal [psychology] a couple of years ago.”. Historian I said, “I knew it was ... billed as a fourth force. It’s something of a follow-on to humanism. It has some spiritual aspects. I know a few names of people who’ve been associated with it. That’s about it.”

Four historians had more familiarity with transpersonal psychology. Historian C described transpersonal psychology as “a nonmainstream movement.” This same historian then went on to say,

I think of it as centered primarily on the West coast, although I’m sure it’s all over the United States to some degree, and the world. Actually, at one point in my career, it’s got to have been 20 years ago now, I chaired a transpersonal psychology dissertation. It seems to me it’s open to spiritual sorts of forces. Also, it seems to me fairly relational in its understanding of things.

Historian A commented,

I’m familiar with ... the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* .... And I have a general idea of transpersonal psychology as being a derivative of humanistic psychology, but that tried to make more room for other [experiences], rather than just an entire focus on individual experience. And that there’s always been a kind of involvement that has been ... inviting of different kinds of religious and other kinds of traditions that might not be religious but might be esoteric in certain ways.

Yet another historian, with even more familiarity, described transpersonal psychology as “an outgrowth, at least partially, of the first wave of humanistic psychology” (Historian G). Historian G then went on to say that transpersonal psychology

has an affinity with other movements, including the 19th Century spiritualism and related psychological research, that formed part of the context within which modern psychology emerged and represents a move away from “me-focused” humanistic psychology toward a larger picture of meaning and life, open to concerns and dimensions traditionally associated with religious quests and questioning.

Finally, Historian E said, “I know far too much to summarize it for you. I go back to reading ... Charles Tart ... and his work on ... altered states of consciousness. [T]hat’s stuff that I came across ... when I was doing my masters level research, and comprehensives in graduate school.”

### *Concern # 2: Is Transpersonal Psychology a Subdiscipline of American Psychology?*

Addressing the second area of concern, the historians were asked to comment on whether or not they perceive transpersonal psychology to be a subdiscipline

of American psychology. The 5 historians having some knowledge of transpersonal psychology's subject matter responded to this inquiry.

The consensus among the 5 individuals who answered this question was that transpersonal psychology is not a subdiscipline of American psychology. However, it was noted that transpersonal psychology might be considered an "interest," "school of thought," a "branch" of an existing subdiscipline in American psychology, or a "developing" subdiscipline. The following quotes exemplify these perspectives:

I don't know if it qualifies as [a subdiscipline]. I mean, you hear almost nothing about it unless ... it's something that you take an active interest in. So I would put it that way. (Historian I)

Subdiscipline is a funny word, because subdiscipline's usually kind of cognitive, clinical, social. So in that sense, I certainly do not [consider transpersonal psychology a subdiscipline]. Now, I wouldn't be averse to calling it a school of thought. (Historian C)

I argue that psychology of religion ... is a subdiscipline [of American psychology]. And the evidence for that is that there are the journals, there are professional organizations, there are the degree programs, et cetera.... But I put transpersonal psychology in there then as one branch of that ... movement. (Historian E)

Certainly, there is a body of literature and a number of people who are in contact and a set of dialogues, and in that sense it's as much a discipline as virtually anything else. But whether you would mean that formally in terms of, let's say, having established a division of APA, it hasn't reached that stage yet. (Historian H)

[I]t certainly wouldn't be conventionally considered to be a subdiscipline in the way that personality or development or educational or counseling or clinical or industrial/organizational are, and there isn't the kind of formal recognition of the sort that you find granted by large organizations, professional and scholarly organizations of psychology. On the other hand, I think it does have its own organization. It has a journal—the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*—and those are some signs that it's in an ascent stage of developing and, potentially, in the future could develop as a subdiscipline. But I would say that it's more of a school or an approach to psychology rather than a subdiscipline. (Historian A)

### *Concern #3: Can Transpersonal Psychology be Described as the Fourth Force in American Psychology?*

The third area of concern involved Abraham Maslow's characterization of transpersonal psychology as the "fourth force" in American psychology. Both the founders of transpersonal psychology and the historians were asked to

comment on whether Maslow's metaphor was an accurate one to draw and if it is relevant today.

Historian D said, "I do recall Maslow's statements about the fourth force. At the time that he published that, I was not very enthusiastic about it." Historian C said "I just don't see its influence as being broad enough to call it a force." A third historian provided a similar perspective, saying, "since the time that Maslow said that, I'm not sure that transpersonal psychology has continued to develop as a fourth force in terms of its popularity, in terms of its salience in the field, as it were" (Historian A). Yet another historian said, "transpersonal psychology does not seem to be as relatively independent as the other 'forces' nor does it seem to be, or have been, a 'force' of comparable sway within more or less standard psychology" (Historian G). Likewise, Historian I said, "Oh, I think it was a hope. I don't think it really panned out. Personally, I don't see it as much of a force or [as] having a lot of strength or influence."

The founders of transpersonal psychology also commented on this question. Washburn said, "As the fourth force, transpersonal psychology is not much of a force at all within American psychology." Walsh suggested that the idea of transpersonal psychology as the fourth force in American psychology "would be acknowledged as such only by a minority of people, largely transpersonal or humanistically oriented people themselves. I think that within the mainstream it's not widely recognized." Krippner similarly noted,

[N]obody in mainstream psychology uses the term third force or fourth force. I don't use them myself ... I think this third force and fourth force business is sort of an "in" term—it's really not used by anybody outside of the field.

A few of the founders explained that when Maslow made the fourth force statement that the metaphor did hold a degree of truth. However, they noted that the metaphor might not be relevant today. Vaughan said, "I think [the fourth force metaphor] was appropriate for the time. And from where [Maslow] was looking at it, I think it was a very useful characterization." However, Vaughan continued, "I don't think it matters much anymore." Wilber said, "[I]t was probably never very accurate, but at the beginning, we all loved it, because it put us on top. For us to claim that they were three schools and we were the fourth was an instant promotion. But it doesn't have much to do with today's schools [of psychology]."

#### *Concern # 4: What Impact Has Transpersonal Psychology Had in Mainstream American Psychology, and Why?*

The next area addressed was what impact transpersonal psychology has had in mainstream American psychology and why. Both groups contributed to this discussion.

Almost unanimously, the founders of transpersonal psychology admitted that transpersonal psychology has had little to no impact in mainstream American psychology. Washburn said, "I think [transpersonal psychology] plays less of a role within mainstream psychology than its founders had hoped in calling it the fourth force." Likewise, Fadiman said that transpersonal psychology has had "much less" of an impact than it could have and described transpersonal psychology as "a large interesting flowering growth on the edge of conventional psychology." Similarly, Vaughan said, "It's been on the fringe, on the periphery." Grof went on to say, "It's kind of tolerated as something peripheral, rather than being seen as something that ... is really a radically new way of looking at things, something that requires a change of the worldview."

Metzner commented, "I think the impact of the idea, the concept of transpersonal [psychology] is probably minimal." Smith also said that transpersonal psychology has had "very little" impact in mainstream American psychology. Walsh said that transpersonal psychology's impact "has been modest ... at least in regards to direct name recognition and effect." Vich said, "So, as far as its mainstream influence, there aren't a lot of instances to point to directly."

Wilber commented that both humanistic and transpersonal psychology have "had virtually no impact" in mainstream American psychology. He went on to say that the individuals participating in the area of "humanistic-transpersonal [psychology have] never really been able to see themselves in a way that would demonstrate their usefulness outside of their professional range."

The historians also saw transpersonal psychology as having little to no impact in mainstream American psychology. Historian G said, "I suspect [transpersonal psychology] has not been a major influence." Historian D said, "It seems to me that it has had and currently is having relatively little influence on ... academic psychology." Historian I expressed, "It's not clear to me how it could ... contribute enough to get a big voice in [mainstream American psychology]." Thus, as another historian noted, "I think overall the impact has been muted" (Historian A). Historian B commented, "Transpersonal psychology's influence has been negative. Not ... negative, [but] it has not had the impact that some of its practitioners ... want it to." Historian C noted,

It seems to me the influence has been indirect. Certainly, I see more people than ever interested, for example, in religious issues, spiritual issues. I see a liberalization to some degree of methods. I mean, all of that is, it seems to me, cooking in American psychology, but I don't know ... whether or how much to attribute some of that to transpersonal [psychology].

Given their assessment of what impact transpersonal psychology has had in mainstream American psychology, the founders of transpersonal psychology and historians of American psychology were asked to comment on *why* the impact has been "muted" or "limited." Three major themes emerged addressing this topic: (a) mainstream American psychologists' resistance to spirituality and philosophy, (b) the rise of cognitive psychology, and (c)

transpersonal psychologists' tendency to isolate themselves from the mainstream.

*Mainstream psychologists' resistance.* Many of the founders of transpersonal psychology commented on what they perceive as American psychologists' extreme focus on materialistic, naturalistic, and positivistic science. As Washburn asserted, "Mainstream American psychology has always taken itself to be a science." Vich called mainstream American psychology "science-oriented" and said that it "certainly does not want to be religious oriented." Wilber similarly said that American "psychology is basically variations on empirical types of behaviorism [and] positivism."

A number of the historians echoed this assessment of American psychology. Historian A noted, "The psychology of science, understood as some sort of science, has always had hegemony in North America ... as soon as behaviorism came on the radar screen, you have this incredible emphasis on science." Historian C said, "Psychologists have taken an extremely narrow view of what humans are and can be. I think they've been method-driven in that way." Historian I noted that American psychology has been impacted by "metatheoretical influences—things like materialism and atomism and individualism and instrumentalism." This same historian went on to remark that "most psychologists don't even know [these metatheories] influence them, but they influence them very powerfully."

According to 5 of the historians, the above-mentioned influences have created an aversion in psychologists to anything having to do with religion or spirituality. As Historian H noted,

When psychology was to become a science, it was going to have to go secular and try to cast off [its] religious or sacred background. And I think American psychology in particular has tried very hard to do that, by and large.

This same historian went on to say,

[P]sychology in general has tried to become materialistic in its orientation, and steer clear of most religious belief systems almost assiduously, so that, if you get any mention of a spiritual experience, they're quick to ... explain it away through, social influence theories or neurological theories. Anyway, anything that won't let it stand as legitimate.

Historian E noted how mainstream American psychologists "want something empirical," and then continued, "They don't really get it when it's a philosophical or theoretical argument." This same historian also said that transpersonal psychology has "probably only minimally" impacted mainstream American psychology because "American psychology has been impervious to anything that has either religious or philosophical overtones." By leaving out the religious and philosophical, this historian argued that mainstream American psychology has effectively shut ideas related to transpersonal psychology out of its domain.

*Cognitive psychology as the real force.* According to the study participants, American psychologists' narrow conception of science has created an inhospitable environment for those wishing to conduct research on spirituality or delve into the philosophical dimensions of psychological topics. However, this scientific (or better, scientific) climate has been more amenable to other developments within American psychology. While engaging in the earlier discussion with regard to the fourth force metaphor, both the founders of transpersonal psychology and the historians noted how the fourth (or even third) force metaphor may have been more accurately used to describe another movement: cognitive psychology.

On the transpersonal side, Krippner commented, "The third force, if you're going to use such a term, is actually cognitive psychology. Why don't people in humanistic and transpersonal psychology put cognitive psychology into the picture? That's the guiding psychology in most colleges and universities today." Likewise, Walsh said, "I suspect that if there were a fourth force it would be probably thought of as cognitive psychology." In relation to the four forces metaphor, Historian H commented, "I think you'd certainly today have to have a cognitive movement in there."

Indeed, when asked what they saw as the prevailing trend, historically, in American psychology, the historians and founders of transpersonal psychology alike pointed to the cognitive movement as the dominant force following the psychoanalytic and behaviorist movements. In addition, both groups perceived the cognitive movement as having overshadowed the humanistic movement. As Historian G noted, "[C]ognitive psychology has greater 'legitimacy' within academic psychology [than humanistic psychology], and the people associated with it have, by and large, had higher status in [American psychology]."

When asked why cognitive psychology had more of an impact on American psychology than humanistic psychology, the historians pointed to cognitive psychologists' adherence to the "traditional scientific approach" (Historian D). Historian B said, "Cognitive psychology is much more 'experimentally developable' than is humanistic psychology." Historian F commented, "[T]he cognitive can be more tightly defined [than the humanistic, and thus] can be made more subject to experiment." Yet another historian noted that humanistic psychology "had some trouble" because "the people involved in it couldn't really make up their minds about science, whether it was valuable or not" (Historian I). Historian I went on to say,

[C]ognitive psychology was very univocal about [the place of science]. Science was very important and it was going to be the basis. It was going to provide a justification for seeing things in this particular way. And so I think it generated more interest, certainly in academia. And ... the people who do most of the teaching are interested in these kinds of intellectual and empirical justifications, and to some degree didn't really believe that humanists could or would provide that sort of justification.

This same historian continued,

I think ... that cognitivism has been preferred in psychology [because] it seems like we can identify hard-nosed factual kinds of mechanisms that describe how and why people do what they do, whereas that's very difficult to do from the humanistic point of view. (Historian I)

Historian D, a self-identified cognitive psychologist, recalled the rise of cognitive and humanistic psychology, and the differences in the two movements:

[Abraham] Maslow was advocating a much more subjective approach than the cognitive psychologists take. While we [cognitive psychologists] are willing to infer various kinds of subjective states, we seldom if ever make claims that we have any direct evidence about those subjective states.

When asked why he thought cognitive psychology has been historically referred to as the “cognitive revolution” while humanistic psychology has not been portrayed as a revolution, Historian D replied that he considers the phrase “cognitive revolution” a misnomer. This historian went on to explain,

I have argued ... that it should have been referred to as a cognitive evolution, and that the changes were not so dramatic as would occur in a revolution, and, thus, the cognitive approach is more closely aligned with the traditional scientific approach that was characteristic of the '40s and '50s. And so, it involved a less dramatic change, and people thus could evolve with the system rather than having to abandon all that had been learned and all that they had learned before. I'd argue ... that cognitive psychology did not involve a catastrophic change in the field, and I think Maslow was proposing a change that would have involved a much more extensive change. There would have been fewer connections to the old form of psychology than there is with cognitive. So, in a sense, there were simply more people who could adapt to the cognitive form of psychology than could adapt to the humanistic approach.

Indeed, Historian A commented,

[C]ognitivism comes along, and cognitivism promises to do what behaviorism tried to do—make psychology into a respected social science. And humanism never had that kind of pretension. So for all those people who are committed to the scientific agenda in psychology, humanism was never seen as a real alternative.

*Transpersonal psychologists' isolationism.* The third reason offered to explain transpersonal psychology's lack of influence in mainstream American psychology was the field's tendency to maintain a certain degree of isolation from the rest of American psychology. As Tart said,

I tend to think that sometimes there's a little too much isolation of transpersonal psychologists. We talk to each other because we're comfortable, and we can talk about weird stuff without being laughed at.

Wilber noted that transpersonal psychologists have mostly remained “confined” to a small geographical area, namely the San Francisco Bay Area. Wilber also suggested that “from the beginning” transpersonal psychology has taken “a very aggressive stance against the orthodox world.” Wilber claimed that since the field’s inception, transpersonal psychologists have adopted an “us against them attitude,” defining transpersonal psychology in opposition to every other school of thought in psychology. This exclusionary perspective has, in Wilber’s view, kept transpersonal psychology from becoming an integrated aspect of mainstream American psychology.

Echoing this perspective, Fadiman said that this kind of “self-aggrandizement of being slightly outlaws” has not paid off in terms of building bridges to and having an influence in the mainstream. Fadiman then related an anecdote to provide an example of how by remaining isolated transpersonal psychologists have neglected an obligation to the larger community.

I just talked today with some young man in New Jersey who is perfectly aware that his need for therapy is enormous.... If I could recommend to him an APA [affiliated] therapist, his father would pay for it. If I recommend him a great transpersonal therapist, which is what he needs because he got into this state by having a lot of early mystical experiences as a kid and not knowing what to do with them, [he won’t pay for it]. Since we’re not mainstreamed, I can’t help him. So that’s our major failure.

It was also asserted that transpersonal psychologists’ isolation includes a failure to learn and use the methodologies of mainstream American psychology. Metzner noted that transpersonal psychologists are “always inventing new research methods that float off into the ethers and ... are very tenuously connected to any kind of empirical data.” Metzner maintained that it is important for transpersonal psychologists to utilize methodologies that are familiar to mainstream psychologists if transpersonal psychologists want their research to be read and respected.

In addition, a number of the founders of transpersonal psychology noted how publishing in mainstream journals is a good way to make contact with the mainstream, yet how they seldom, if ever, publish in such journals. Walsh noted,

We, including me, have not published enough in the mainstream. It’s easier to get our transpersonal stuff published in the transpersonal literature, but that’s playing in the sandbox. And one of the regrets I have about my own work and 20 years of work in this field is that I did not more actively seek to publish in the mainstream literature.

Similarly, Metzner noted how transpersonal psychologists study transpersonal “experiences and develop questionnaires and do research. But then they tend to publish it in the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*.” Fadiman also noted how *JTP* has limited its reach to a small, isolated audience. He said *JTP* and the Association for Transpersonal Psychology “never quite saw themselves as public entities.”

*Concern # 5: How Might Transpersonal Psychologists Participate in the Development of Mainstream American Psychology?*

Given the above assessment, both groups were asked how transpersonal psychologists might participate more effectively in mainstream American psychology.

*The historians' suggestions.* The historians suggested several ways for transpersonal psychologists to build bridges to mainstream American psychology. Historian D stressed the importance of connecting to existing commonalities with the mainstream. This historian said,

One should emphasize similarities rather than stressing only [differences], and I think that that was, in part, why cognitive psychology managed to make the changes in contemporary psychology that it has.... The people in cognitive psychology found ways of remaining connected to old psychology, to bringing old ideas into new perspectives and so forth. And so I think that transpersonal psychologists, to be effective, will have to look for ways in which they are similar to other kinds of psychology and indicate how they might enhance approaches or investigations of things that others have been dealing with, rather than stressing their differences.

Historian G suggested writing an innovative text that speaks to mainstream interests yet relays a transpersonal message. The historian said,

Given the ... trends of the moment (including health psychology, spirituality, and values, as well as the study of consciousness), it is possible [for transpersonal psychologists to dialogue with individuals in the mainstream], but there would have to be a strong, novel statement (book) that addressed these other currents *and added something important to the mix*—something that was compelling and theoretically useful. To simply say, “we talk about the same kinds of things” wouldn’t get you very far.

A few of the historians suggested that transpersonal psychologists build bridges to the field of psychology of religion. Historian H noted, “There’s ... a pretty active group in psychology of religion that could be very open to a lot of what goes on in transpersonal [psychology].” Another historian said,

I first think about the possibility of maybe forming partners with the more religious psychologists.... I’m afraid there’d be some distrust, because many transpersonal psychologists would see many religious psychologists as being more dogmatic. But it seems to me you could join together with them. (Historian C)

A third historian suggested that transpersonal psychologists, humanistic psychologists, and individuals interested in psychology and religion combine resources at the yearly APA convention. This historian said,

I think, with the current APA convention format, they [are] ... talking about some new kinds of ways of doing interdivisional kinds of programming.

Obviously, the people who are interested in that should try to get, like, the religion and humanistic divisions to do some creative interdivisional program with groups of people that wouldn't usually be talking to them ... So I think the APA convention is a chance to do that. (Historian E)

Historian E also suggested that transpersonal psychologists publish in mainstream journals in order to build bridges to mainstream American psychology:

[T]he best way to do it, I think, is to keep trying to put your ideas into the mainline journals.... When someone like Stanley Krippner publishes in the *American Psychologist*, that's good for humanistic and transpersonal psychologists.

A different avenue was indicated by Historian H who said, "I think [transpersonal psychology's] greatest opening is ... within therapy, within circles of therapy and particularly those groups which are opening themselves up to spiritual issues within the therapeutic system." This historian explained,

Where I think [transpersonal psychologists] could have an impact and haven't really yet, so far as I can see it, is [in clinical psychology which has] just had a sort of dramatic turn in terms of openness to spiritual issues and therapy, a lot of books on the implication of spiritual experience for therapeutic process and the uses, and discussion of spiritual matters in therapy and so on. And that area would be wide-open for transpersonal.

Finally, Historian C suggested that transpersonal psychologists "draw on qualitative researchers" who are in the mainstream. This historian said,

[I]t seems to me sort of a central, sort of omission in contemporary psychology is meaning, because you're really going to not be able to operationalize meaning, behaviorally or observationally, in which case it seems to me the qualitative researchers would be another partner in [the transpersonal psychologists'] quest, in some sense, to build a bridge to the mainstream.

*The founder's views.* The founders called for open-mindedness coupled with critical thinking, a renewed emphasis in transpersonal psychology on integration, and healthy, open communication with mainstream American psychologists.

Walsh related,

I think the challenge for us is to integrate open-mindedness with critical thinking. It's relatively easy to be critical which I think is predominant, perhaps, all over [and] is overemphasized in the mainstream. It's easy to be open-minded which, perhaps, is overemphasized in transpersonal. It's hard to be both.

Walsh continued,

If we want to have a significant impact, then our ongoing challenges to look for are to be most beneficial and impactful. And I think part of that\_not all of it but part of it\_consists of being able to speak to the largest spectrum of the population as professionally as we can, and certainly, to whatever extent we can, speaking to mainstream psychologists, psychiatrists, other health professionals, mainstream intellectuals of one kind or another, working through both a grass and brass, or top-down and bottom-up, approach, to whatever extent we can. You know, my own belief is that, if we're going to be doing all this work, we might as well try and make the best and biggest contribution we can. And how to do that of course is an ongoing question and challenge for all of us. But I think our impact will be severely limited to the extent that we're unable to build those kinds of bridges.

Similarly, yet in a more humorous tone, Tart admonished the transpersonal psychologist to “[h]old your head up scientifically instead of just hanging out with other California kooks.”

Metzner put forth, “As long as the field stays open to trying to connect to other perspectives, then I think it’ll be vital and continue to grow.” Likewise, Vich said, “what is most significant in transpersonal, whatever that turns out to be, [is that it] connects up with everything else in psychology, and I think thereby with everything else in the culture. And that’s a success that one keeps working at.”

Krippner said,

I think that transpersonal psychology will attain more visibility if it seeks to expand those footholds that it’s made in mainstream psychology, which would mean in the death and dying field and the altered states of consciousness field, in the field of psychological therapy for people who have spiritual or religious problems. Those are the three fronts that I see openings in and where I think transpersonalists should put their efforts and try to make connections with mainstream psychology and show what they have to offer that is practical and useful and viable.

Fadiman, in a similar tone, said of transpersonal psychologists: “One of our tasks for the next 10 years is to maintain the links. I mean, [the mainstream psychologists] may have closed the bridge at both ends, or at least at one end, but we’ve got to keep the bridge built.”

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study point to several important conclusions and open the door to just as many questions. It was discovered that the historians of psychology sampled have some awareness of transpersonal psychology, although the extent of their knowledge varies from never having heard of it to having rather extensive knowledge about its subject matter. The historians generally perceived transpersonal psychology as an independent “school of

thought,” yet did not consider the field to be a subdiscipline of mainstream American psychology. Neither the founders of transpersonal psychology nor the historians deemed transpersonal psychology to be the “fourth force” in American psychology. Rather, cognitive psychology was perceived as the fourth, or even third, force in the history of American psychology. Furthermore, both the founders of transpersonal psychology and the historians held the impression that transpersonal psychology has had little to no impact in American psychology. The reasons for this relative lack of influence were explained to be due to three factors: (a) mainstream psychologists’ adoption of “scientism” and subsequent dismissal of spiritual and philosophical ideas, (b) the rise of cognitive psychology and its overshadowing of humanistic and transpersonal psychology, and (c) transpersonal psychologists’ tendency to isolate themselves from mainstream institutions and professional activities.

In sum, these findings point to the conclusion that outside of the field itself, transpersonal psychology is probably seen as an obscure, relatively unknown, and insignificant contributor to mainstream American psychology. Although originally intended as an emerging “force” in the evolution of psychology, the field has remained an isolated entity existing on the fringe of conventional studies of mind and behavior.

Given this lack of professional salience, transpersonal psychology may be vulnerable to a number of negative factors including, but not limited to, an inability to attract funding for research and development, little chance of directly influencing public or social policy, and susceptibility to gradual decline if something more fashionable (e.g., positive psychology) emerges to replace it (and its predecessor humanistic psychology). Without the support of the larger psychological community, transpersonal psychologists risk being ignored and disfavored by professionally and politically powerful organizations such as the APA. If transpersonal psychology does not find a way to communicate its knowledge and relay its significance in an effective way, it could become an inconsequential phenomenon in the history of American psychology’s development.

In line with the above conclusions, both the founders of transpersonal psychology and the historians of American psychology offered practical suggestions for how transpersonal psychologists might more effectively engage within the context mainstream American psychology.

The historians gave the following advice:

1. Stress similarities with mainstream ideas rather than accentuating differences.
2. Make a statement (e.g., book) that addresses mainstream concerns yet contributes something novel to mainstream research.
3. Build bridges to the mainstream via the Psychology of Religion Division of the APA.
4. Publish in mainstream journals.
5. Focus on making inroads in the area of psychotherapeutic practice.

6. Partner with individuals doing qualitative research in the mainstream.

The founders of transpersonal psychology offered the following advice for their field:

1. Integrate open-mindedness with critical thinking.
2. Speak to the largest audience possible.
3. Expand the practice, and thus influence, of transpersonal psychology beyond California.
4. Connect with individuals in the mainstream who are interested in death and dying, altered states, and spirituality and therapy.
5. Make concerted efforts to connect with mainstream ideas, institutions, and practices.

Whether or not these suggestions can, or will, be implemented is uncertain. What is certain is that it is incumbent upon transpersonal psychologists to make their work known to the greater psychological community. Rather than waiting for their field to be recognized as a formidable psychological “force,” transpersonal psychologists will have to find ways to communicate within the context of mainstream psychology. This will require leadership spearheaded by the founders or other individuals holding some capacity to influence both transpersonal psychology and the greater psychological community. It may also necessitate a “make-over” of sorts such that the word “transpersonal” becomes more comprehensible to individuals not affiliated with the field. Transpersonal psychologists should define their area of study through the language of other psychologists, speaking intelligently about the various aspects of what it means to be human and what it means to transcend our humanity. The challenge for transpersonal psychologists is to use the language of mainstream psychology while skillfully adding their own conceptual contributions.

#### CONCLUSION

Additional research into this topic is needed. One suggestion is to conduct a corresponding quantitative study using a large-scale questionnaire that asks a representative sample of “mainstream” American psychologists to address the five areas of concern. A second suggestion is to consult with the younger generation of transpersonal psychologists, as opposed to the founders, to assess how much emphasis they are putting on building bridges to mainstream American psychology. A final suggestion is to organize a focus group of both transpersonal psychologists and historians of psychology and have them speak to the questions broached in the current study. By coming to a more thorough understanding of transpersonal psychology’s placement in American psychology, transpersonal psychologists will be able to effect change where it is needed both within their own field and in psychology as a whole.

It is also important to note that although transpersonal psychology has not been fully integrated into mainstream American psychology, it has made

inroads into the mainstream of British psychology. In fact, the British equivalent to the APA, the British Psychological Society, has an entire section devoted to the study of transpersonal psychology. Currently, transpersonal associations also exist in Austria, Croatia, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Ireland, Bulgaria, Italy, Australia, and Japan. Thus, transpersonal psychology has had an international reach which may transcend the unique cultural influences of 1960s America.

It may also be important to note the emergence of mindfulness practice and Buddhist psychology as flourishing domains in mainstream academic and clinical psychology (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). Perhaps American psychology is just now, 40 years following Maslow's declaration of a fourth force, ready to embrace a transpersonal perspective on psychology.

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