

Transpersonal psychology



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Considering just two of the following approaches – transpersonal psychology, parapsychology – indicate how they differ, how they overlap, and what they can offer to each other and to the study of exceptional human experiences. Critically evaluate both approaches’ drawbacks and benefits to the psychology of EHEs.

Transpersonal psychology studies the psychology of different experiences an individual has of Exceptional human experiences. Many different experiences can be had, ranging from spiritual to mystical to paranormal. Before the term transpersonal psychology was founded, there were many other approaches in this area of research. James (1905) was the first person to use the term ‘transpersonal’ and then Analytical psychology which was founded by Carl Jung in 1920’s – 1950’s. Then came along Psychosynthesis which was founded by Roberto Assagioli. Maslow (1960) introduced Humanistic psychology and was called to be the 3rd force, 1st force being behaviourism and 2nd force being psychoanalysis. Abraham Maslow and Anthony Sutich began the formation Association for Humanistic Psychology in 1961. After a while they started to think Humanistic Psychology was lacking certain features and in 1967 Maslow, Suitich, Grof, Fadiman all had a meeting and agreed upon the 4th force called transpersonal psychology and soon after Association of Transpersonal Psychology was created. Transpersonal psychology can be linked with other research interest such as Mediation, consciousness studies and NDE. Daniels (2005) claimed scientific transpersonal psychology must be based on 4 stages of observation, theorising, testing and sharing which also supported Tarts 2004 (cited in Shadow, Self, Spirit) model of ‘essential science’. There are many different features of transpersonal psychology such as it is considered more normative and more of an applied science rather than a pure science.

When looking at transpersonal psychology, it has brought a lot to the field of exceptional human experiences as this combined many of the older fields of research in this area to make and a new found term which incorporates all the felids of research. Transpersonal psychology has grown over the years to overcome the mainstream sciences such as pragmacentrism, cognicentric and ethnocentric views. They have done this by looking at transpersonal experiences and authenticity and their actual worth. Wilber (1977) has helped transpersonal psychology become more recognised and accredited by his work within this topic area. He has drawn data from many different topic areas such as psychology to sociology by overall making people understand in a logical way about esotericism. Although a drawback was that the data he used was mainly from the reading he had completed over certain time. Also Tarts and Grof's research of consciousness played a major part of constructing transpersonal psychology and by looking at their work it showed how important the research was to transpersonal psychology. Tart's research helped us understand d-SoC and d-ASC and Grof's research which founded the new term 'holotropic therapy'.

Over the years transpersonal psychology has come to certain criticism as some branding it 'unscientific' and considered it a 'new age'. Due to the fact some people branded it 'new age' theory; this affected the development and acceptance of transpersonal psychology in many places such as America. These assumptions were made without looking at the data transpersonal psychology was based upon and without looking at the many different researchers who put transpersonal psychology on the map such a Grof etc. These researches thought the previous fields for this sort of area

were missing certain traits and created transpersonal psychology. On the other hand Freidman (2002) criticised transpersonal psychology for being 'underdeveloped field of science' meaning it wasn't considered valid enough when looking at the psychology of exceptional human experiences. Suggests that it is a mix of transpersonal psychology and a majority of transpersonal studies which largely consist of unscientific approaches. Another researcher also questioned transpersonal psychology scientific significance and its many different relationships with religion etc. James had been criticised with his relationship with transpersonal psychology saying it lacked understanding of many different forms of consciousness such as many different negative measures. Above there are many benefits and drawbacks to the study of exceptional human experience when looking at transpersonal psychology, but overall by doing research on this topic, it gives more insight on to the study of exceptional human experiences even though there has been a lot of criticism.

Parapsychology is aims to investigate psychic abilities using scientific methods and studies ESP or PSI. Many different experiments have been done to try proving this theory. Was first called 'psychical research' and then Rhine (1935) first formed parapsychology which mainly focused on telepathy, precognition and clairvoyance etc. He used Zener symbols to create a simple card guessing task while using statistical methods within this research. Participants were shown 5 symbols and success rate was estimated at 20%. On the other hand there were many disadvantages to this sort of experiment ranging from score recording mistakes to poor shuffling techniques. He tried to address these errors by repeating the

experiments again hoping to decrease the bias within the experiment and also by publishing articles and books.

Parapsychology provides many benefits for the study of psychology of exceptional human experiences as proven by many different experiments as it aims to prove psychic abilities. By looking at Ganzfeld experiment which consists of two people, the first being put in to a Ganzfeld state and the second person shows particular pictures. The second person is told to send the pictures mentally to the first person. During the experiment which would on average last about 30mins is told to speak aloud thought out the experiment. After the experiment is over, the first person is show 4 images, one being the target and the other 3 as fakes and asked to identify the target photo using the experiences from the experiment which they just encounter and the images being mentally sent. Criticisms have been made for this experiment saying there are strong mythological shortcomings. A drawback for this approach which critics have came up with is suggesting researches pick which results to publish basically meaning parapsychologists decide to put the positive results out to the public and decide to keep the negative results hidden. This has a profound effect on Meta analysis which combines many studies together to get an overall opinion. A report which was published in 1988 by NAS concluded that there was no scientific justification for the existence of parapsychological phenomena. When looking at parapsychology, for most people it is seen farfetched to in order for people to start believing, strong evidence needs to prove the theories. Most critics of parapsychology suggest that the results gathered are floured in many ways such as fraud or bias and are considered not to be valid such

as Ray Hyman. Other critics argue most studies have not shown concrete evidence of psychic abilities rising the questioning of is parapsychology a science. This is a drawback to the psychology of exceptional human experiences as all of these above question validity and question the fact that do these exceptional human experiences happen as most experiments are faulted in one way or another to prove what they are trying to find out. As you can tell there are multiple benefits and drawbacks to the study of exceptional human experience when looking at parapsychology, but mainly overall by doing research in the manner it does, it gives more insight on to the study of exceptional human experiences even though there has been a lot of criticism.

Transpersonal psychology and parapsychology differ in many different ways. Firstly they both differ on the fact of what they are trying to find out as transpersonal psychology is looking more at the spiritual side of exceptional human experiences while parapsychology is looking at the psychic abilities of different exceptional human experiences. Transpersonal psychology is seen as hermeneutic as it more about explanation and understanding the research area. Parapsychology is seen as a pure classic science which is widely based on different experiments and surveys which differs with transpersonal psychology which uses different methods of phenomenology and ethnology. Both approaches differ on how they carry out the research as transpersonal psychology uses qualitative analysis while parapsychology uses quantitative. Parapsychology uses the approach of experimental but overall parapsychology is an approach which is widely questioned and criticized in many ways. On the other hand transpersonal psychology is an

approach which acknowledged and established within its field of research. Paranormal experiences have different objectives when talking about transpersonal psychology and parapsychology. According to Daniels (2005) who said when looking at transpersonal psychology, paranormal experiences are of interest if they can promote transpersonal development but on the other hand when looking at parapsychology, paranormal experiences are only of interest if they can objectively report paranormal phenomena. This differs between the two approaches as it is clear that transpersonal psychology are looking at the experience as a whole rather than parapsychology who are looking at collecting data to prove the phenomenon which shows clear differences between methodologies for both approaches. This also supports Allport 1955 (cited in Shadow, Self, Spirit). who looked the difference between humanistic and positivistic camps in psychology and concluded that a transpersonal psychologist is more concerned with personal significance while parapsychology is more interested in statistical significance. Also according to Wilber (1997), using his quadrant model it can be identified that he suggested and interpreted that transpersonal psychology is mainly an 'interior-individual' approach. He also said that parapsychology was opposite and was mainly an 'exterior-individual' approach.

Transpersonal psychology and parapsychology overlap in many ways as well. Daniels (2005) suggested many common areas of interest for transpersonal psychology and parapsychology. For example he suggested Auras and subtle energy systems, Channelling and mediumistic experiences, Experiences of Angels, Experiences of synchronicity, Lucid dreaming, Near death

experiences (NDE), Out of body experience (OOBE), Past life memories are all common areas of interest for both approaches. Also in other researches argue that even though both approaches work in similar interest areas but find out information in different ways, but both aim to help the participant with therapy to help explain to them their exceptional human experience. Also when looking at transpersonal psychologists such as Grof and Tart it is important to realize they also had a given interest in parapsychology. It is also important to notice the fact that both approaches could benefit from one another's contribution as this way parapsychologists could find out more about the spiritual side and the experience as a phenomenon and transpersonal psychology could see the statistical side of their findings and could lead to developing more research questions in the long run.

According to some researches transpersonal psychology and parapsychology are two completely different approaches but some leading researches such as Tart 2004 (cited in Shadow, Self, Spirit). who was one of the few who considered both disciplines to be of great importance when looked at together. He said over time transpersonal psychology have forget about the scientific sides to their experiment and don't agree with parapsychology as they are more interested in data findings rather than looking at meaning of results but Tart argues that both approaches need each other as they both carry benefits which can help make both their data more valid in the long run. Both approaches offer a lot to each other as for example if parapsychology used ideas from transpersonal psychology this could in the end give them more enlightenment on why they got the figures they did and same goes for transpersonal psychology. If transpersonal psychology used

parapsychology, this would give them evidence to support their claims.

Transpersonal psychology has offered a lot to study of exceptional human experiences as they have done a lot of research in this topic to find out the many different experiences people have and tried to prove and explain these different sorts of experiences. Same goes with parapsychology, as this approach has tried to scientifically prove different psychic abilities. Both approaches together help advance the work done on studying exceptional human experiences by using a variety of methods all to find the outcome.

As you can see transpersonal psychology and parapsychology are two main approaches when it comes to studying psychology of exceptional human experiences. Both approaches differ on most things but do have a few things in common with one another. It has also shown that if both approaches worked together, they could offer each other the point that either one lacks. Both have played an important part in study of exceptional human experiences as both uses a variety of methods to find out and prove EHE meaning there is more research growing day by day to support this topic area.

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