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The Integral Transpersonal Development programme:

A model for experiential assessment for undergraduate transpersonal psychology

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Overview

- Transpersonal Psychology @ UON
- Introducing the ITD programme
- Theoretical Background
- ITD Structure
- Assessment
- Outcomes
- Critiques
- Conclusions

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Transpersonal Psychology @ UON

- Malcolm Walley, Kevin Buchanan, Anthony Edwards
- PSY3015 Transpersonal Psychology, PSY3007 Consciousness
- MSc TPACS – Chris Roe
- Current incarnation: PSY3027 Psychology of Religion, Spirituality and Wellbeing



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Teaching the transpersonal...

- TP overlooked in most academic courses of course...
- “ Transpersonal psychology has no agreed upon statements of educational (student) outcomes related to or supportive of accepted general curricula models for transpersonal education at the undergraduate level which prepares future social and behavioral scientists for later graduate training and professional careers in the psychological sciences
 - Cunningham (2006, p.63)
- “ ...since its inception, transpersonal psychology related to education has remained significantly dormant
 - Buckler (2011, p.297)

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Transpersonal Psychology and Experiential Learning

“ Transpersonal psychology differs from most schools of psychology in its assumption that the spiritual or transcendental dimensions can and should be studied using an experiential approach leading to the development of perennial wisdom.

– Claude.ai, misattributed to Boucouvalas (1999)!

- Learning through “knowing by being” vs just intellectual study
- Firsthand experiences, not just abstract concepts
- Transformative, not just informative
- ITD provides opportunities for experiential transpersonal learning: Students immerse themselves in praxis and reflexivity



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Introducing the ITD programme

During the ITD Programme, you will choose **two** areas of your own life – **developmental domains** – to concentrate on and **immerse** yourself in a self-designed 8-week experiential engagement with each of those two areas. As the programme proceeds, you'll **reflect** on your experiences in an **experiential log**, and at the end of the programme, you'll **synthesize** these experiential reflections together with the transpersonal theories we're covering in the module (as well as other psychological theory you've been covering across your whole programme of studies) in an **integral learning account**.



- Design & planning (choosing the two domains)
- 8-10 weeks of immersive activities
- Reflective writing throughout
- Synthesize experience and theory in final report

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Theoretical Background - Multiple Ways of Knowing

- Heron: Experiential, presentational, propositional, practical knowing
 - Immersion = experiential knowing
 - Reflection = presentational knowing
 - Final report = propositional knowing
 - Transformed life = practical knowing

“We know a thing only by uniting with it; by assimilating it; by an interpenetration of it and ourselves. It gives itself to us, just in so far as we give ourselves to it; and it is because our outflow towards things is usually so perfunctory and so languid, that our comprehension of things is so perfunctory and languid too.

– (Underhill 1914/2013, p.6)



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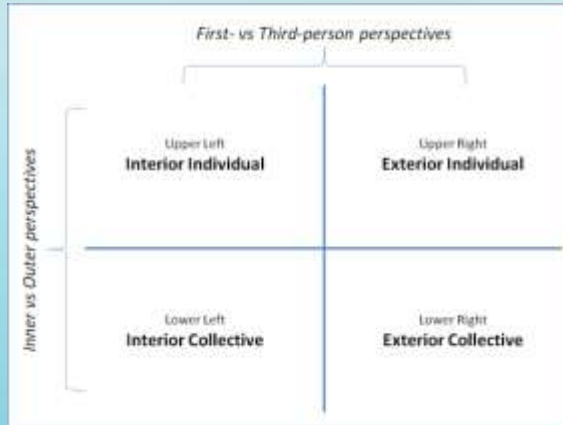
ITD Structure - Choosing Domains

- “Domains” based on Wilber’s AQAL model – equivalent to any conceivable developmental “line”
 - But: more focused on individual activity – so, not ‘physical fitness’ but ‘swimming’, not ‘linguistic competence’ but ‘learning French’
- Choose two developmental domains:
 - One familiar area to deepen
 - One new area to explore
 - Must include spiritual/religious domain*
- Encouraged not to just go for “UL” domains



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Wilber's AQAL model (or a bit of it...)



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AQAL An Integral Map

All Quadrants Levels/Stages • States Lines • Types

Ego Development Stages

- Ironist - Unitive** (1-2): Only personal take-positions. 2D gross perspective. Gross focused, global state: limited of awareness, outer thought and body and body. Limited capacity awareness and responsiveness. Hours of self as world, as a focus, as responsibility.
- Magician - Construct Aware (3/4)** (3-4): Higher gross take-positions. 3D gross perspective. Gross focused, global state: limited of awareness, outer thought and body and body. Limited capacity awareness and responsiveness. Hours of self as world, as a focus, as responsibility.
- Strategist - Autonomous (5)** (5): Higher gross take-positions. 3D gross perspective. Gross focused, global state: limited of awareness, outer thought and body and body. Limited capacity awareness and responsiveness. Hours of self as world, as a focus, as responsibility.
- Individualist - Pluralist (4/5)** (4/5): Higher gross take-positions. 3D gross perspective. Gross focused, global state: limited of awareness, outer thought and body and body. Limited capacity awareness and responsiveness. Hours of self as world, as a focus, as responsibility.
- Achiever - Conscientious (4)** (4): Higher gross take-positions. 3D gross perspective. Gross focused, global state: limited of awareness, outer thought and body and body. Limited capacity awareness and responsiveness. Hours of self as world, as a focus, as responsibility.
- Egocent - Self Conscious (3/4)** (3/4): Higher gross take-positions. 3D gross perspective. Gross focused, global state: limited of awareness, outer thought and body and body. Limited capacity awareness and responsiveness. Hours of self as world, as a focus, as responsibility.
- Optimist - Confident (3)** (3): Higher gross take-positions. 3D gross perspective. Gross focused, global state: limited of awareness, outer thought and body and body. Limited capacity awareness and responsiveness. Hours of self as world, as a focus, as responsibility.
- Opportunist - Self Protective (2/3)** (2/3): Higher gross take-positions. 3D gross perspective. Gross focused, global state: limited of awareness, outer thought and body and body. Limited capacity awareness and responsiveness. Hours of self as world, as a focus, as responsibility.
- Impulsive (2-)** (2-): Higher gross take-positions. 3D gross perspective. Gross focused, global state: limited of awareness, outer thought and body and body. Limited capacity awareness and responsiveness. Hours of self as world, as a focus, as responsibility.

Types

- Harmonizing-Contemplative
- Integrative-Viscerosomatic
- Personalistic-Relativistic
- Multiplicitic-Individualistic
- Purposeful-Abstract
- Egocentric-Exploitive
- Magical-Avantic
- Instinctive

States of Consciousness

- Gross
- Subtle
- Causal
- Nonlocal

Lines of Development

- Self
- Interpersonal
- Relational
- Moral
- Spiritual
- Consciousness
- Causality
- Metaphysics
- Other

Developmental Altitude

- Clear Light
- Spectrum
- Ultraviolet
- Violet
- Indigo
- Violet
- Teal
- Teal
- Green
- Orange
- Amber
- Red
- Negative
- Infrared

Individual

Interior

Exterior

Group

Interior

Exterior

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ITD Structure - Planning the programme

- See *ITD Planning Template.docx* online
- Worked on in class with peer & tutor reflection
- Identify the domains
 - Set a starting point
 - Plan specific activities
 - Set goals if appropriate (enlightenment, anyone?!)
 - Consider risks & rewards
- Finally, sign the 'Statement of commitment'
- Make commitments for 8-10 weeks
- ITD programmes have to be flexible!



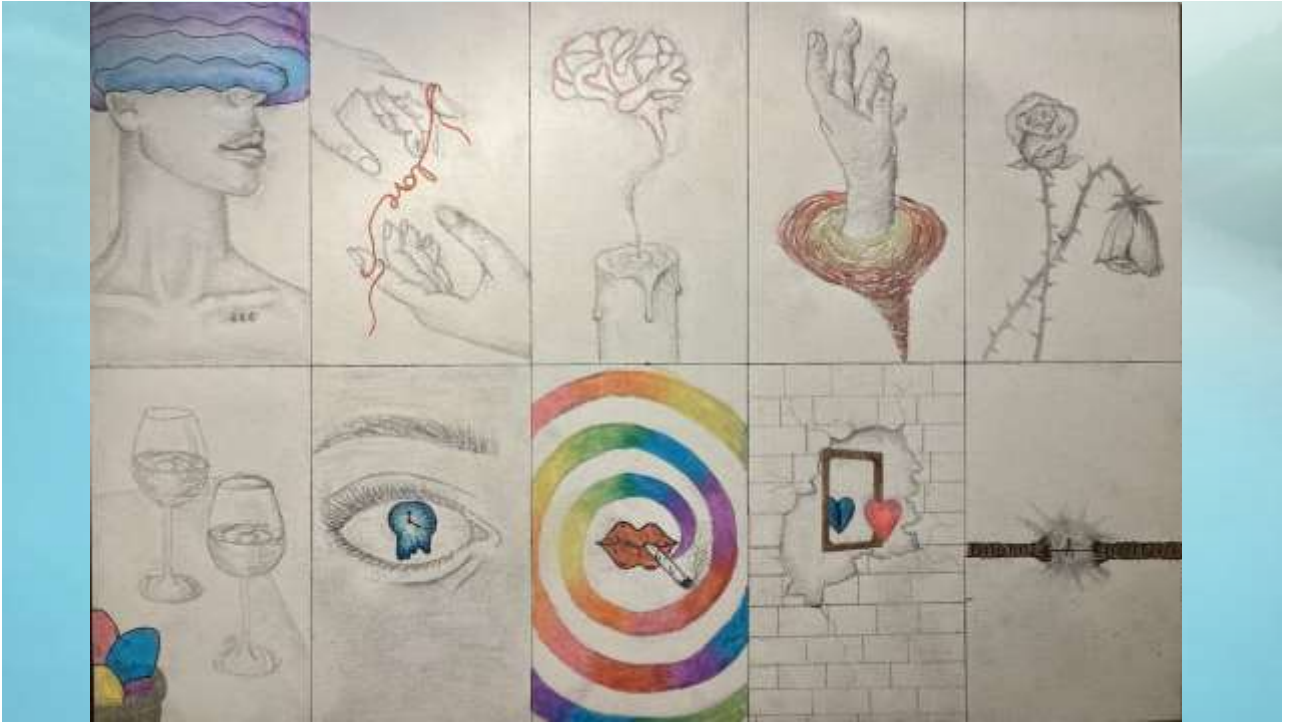
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ITD Structure - Immersion and Reflection

- Immerse self fully in domain activities
- Reflect on experiences in some form of journal or other reflective activity
- Balance non-judgmental immersion with conscious reflection (which can include ongoing programme adaptation)
- ITD groups – supervised online or face-to-face groups with a tutor (approx. 1hr fortnightly) for general sharing & support – experiential & practical, not aimed at assignment support



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Written Assignment

- Integral learning log of 2,000 words
 - Suggested to look for integrated themes across domains rather than deal with each individually
- Experiential log – brief summary appended
 - Context & critical incidents
 - Also to give marking tutor an overview of activities
- Relate experiences to concepts from TP *and* across their other psychology learning
- Dedicated assignment support session



“Remember, we’re not assessing your experience or your personal development, we’re assessing how you write about them and how you situate them in a theoretical context.
– ITD Handbook

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Assessing an ITD report

- Assess ability to integrate theory and practice
- Goal is transformative and integrated learning, not some measure of "progress"
- Depth of insight demonstrated – personal & theory
- Marking to Learning Outcomes:
 - Uses and evaluates relevant academic resources to substantiate reflexive claims [LOa1]
 - Provides a clear and concise experiential log of ITD activities [LOc1]
 - Reflects deeply and insightfully on both personal and theoretical implications of experiential work [LOc2]
 - Reflexive work shows clear links between experiential activities and theory [LOc3]
 - Activity log reflects a clear and ongoing engagement with planned activities [LOd1]
 - Provides evidence of a well-planned ITD programme in line with handbook guidelines [LOe1]



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Outcomes - Transformative Impact



- Students gain firsthand exposure to transpersonal practices
- Opportunities for significant personal shifts
- Skills in critical reflection and scholarly analysis
- Ongoing transformation beyond the course

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Critiques and Limitations

- Relies heavily on Wilber's model, which has limitations
- Concerns around assessing spiritual progress
- Self-directed activities lack oversight
- Brief engagement risks superficiality
- Subjective experiences make assessment difficult
- Focus on individualism, not collective
- Bias towards intellectual reflection



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Conclusions

- The ITD programme provides a valuable experiential learning opportunity in transpersonal psychology
- Assessment focuses on integrating experiences and theory meaningfully
- Deep engagement with practices can lead to transformative insights
- Transpersonal psychology requires engagement beyond the conceptual
- programmes like the ITD offer students the chance to develop themselves holistically



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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the author used the following tools and services. After using them, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication:

- Some slide headings & talking points were generated by [Claude.ai](#) in response to an upload of the *ITD Handbook* (authored by AGF)
- Thanks to [Claude.ai](#) for loads of fake quotes and citations too!
- All images except theme background and student work were generated by [Adobe Firefly](#)
- [Elicit.org](#) and [SemanticScholar.org](#) were used to help search for relevant research articles & books



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Any questions?

Speak now or...

...well, or catch me later I guess.