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A case study of three transpersonal psychotherapists and their bhakti and karma approaches to transpersonal psychotherapy.

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A CASE STUDY OF THREE TRANSPERSONAL
PSYCHOTHERAPISTS AND THEIR
BHAKTI AND KARMA APPROACHES TO
TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Edward H. Connor

May 1999

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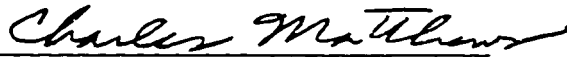
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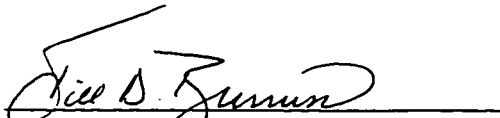
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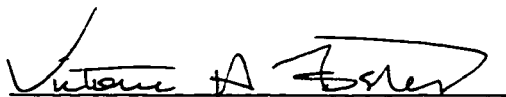
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CHAPTER ONE

Statement Of The Problem

The expanding field of transpersonal psychology is providing a much needed link between the field of psychology and the variety of human ‘transpersonal’ experiences normally associated with the world’s spiritual and religious traditions. A review of the most influential transpersonal literature of the past thirty years reveals the relative absence of two of the most important and common spiritual practices or ‘paths’ found in the world’s religious traditions: ‘bhakti’ and ‘karma’. For instance, in the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, (the publication where the foundational articles in the field of transpersonal psychology were first published) only one article focusing on the path of love or bhakti (Welwood, 1985) and no articles addressing the path of service or karma appear since the inception of the journal in 1969. This research study proposes to examine the following question: What is the effect of the spiritual approaches associated with bhakti and karma practices on the personal and professional lives of three practicing psychotherapists?

This chapter will provide a brief overview of the major themes and issues expressed in the developing literature of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy while simultaneously outlining the view that there is a relative absence in the underlying theoretical orientations of that literature regarding bhakti and karma spiritual practices. A description of the purpose of the study, the research questions, methodological

considerations, important definitions, and delimitations and limitations of the study will also be presented.

Introduction: Descriptive Material

Transpersonal Psychology

Several notable articles and books have been written in the past fifteen years attempting to synthesize and standardize numerous definitions that comprise the underlying assumptions of the growing field of transpersonal psychology (Cortright, 1997; Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992; Walsh, 1993; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993; Wilber, 1995). One such influential article by Walsh and Vaughan (1993) appearing in the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, defines transpersonal psychology as “the area of psychology that focuses on the study of transpersonal experiences and related phenomena. These phenomena include the causes, effects and correlates of transpersonal experiences and development, as well as the disciplines and practices inspired by them” (p. 203). Central to this definition is the description given to transpersonal experiences “as experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche or cosmos” (p. 203).

In formulating this definition, an effort was made to minimize ties to particular theological, philosophical or theoretical presuppositions. As such, this description is not meant to bind practitioners to any particular interpretation of what can or cannot be considered a transpersonal experience. As the definition focuses on experiences rather

than a particular theoretical or spiritual understanding, it allows for a wide variety of interpretations, both religious and nonreligious.

In the past, transpersonal psychology has included various spiritual or religious points of views, ultimate dimensions of human experience, altered states of consciousness, and psychological health and well-being. At the same time, the major contributors to theory building in transpersonal psychology have all included the religious or spiritual dimension into their approaches: Jung (1938), Vaughan (1985), Walsh (1993), Washburn (1994); and Wilber (1997). One recent comprehensive overview of the theory and practice of transpersonal psychotherapy defines transpersonal psychology “as the melding of the wisdom of the world’s spiritual traditions with the learning of modern psychology” (Cortright, 1997, p. 8).

One of the first psychotherapists to articulate the importance of transpersonal and religious experiences as they relate to psychological health was Carl Jung. (Boorstein, 1996; Brookes, 1996; Cortright, 1997; Vaughan, 1995; Washburn, 1994; Wilber, 1995). Jung believed that transpersonal and religious experiences arose out of each person’s “collective unconscious” and identified the unique emotional quality of the transpersonal as ‘numinosity’ (Jaffe, 1975, p. 37).

According to Jung, each person possesses both a person unconscious - made up of unpleasant experiences repressed during childhood years, and a collective unconscious, the contents of which are shared by all people. The collective unconscious is inherited and is made up of what Jung called ‘archetypes,’ or innate and internal forms of thought and behavior (Bennet, 1983). The most central archetype is the ‘self’ which encompasses

both the conscious and unconscious, both instinctual and spiritual. Jung ultimately speaks of the archetype of the self as the God-image (Fordham, 1953). “The experience of the self is archetypal, and it is portrayed in dreams and visions by many and varied images, all of which may be called archetypes of the self” (p. 64). Psychological health is facilitated when the individual consciously allows archetypal energy - especially energy from the self - to arise from the unconscious through symbols, dreams and images, and then actively uses these images to help shape thoughts, feelings, and actions” (Corrigh, 1997, p. 82).

Wilber, noted as the most influential philosopher and theorist of transpersonal psychology since the formal inception of the field in the early 1970's, asserts that spiritual traditions excel at the understanding and promotion of human growth from the standpoint of a healthy ego, but it is Western psychology that has provided an understanding of the stages and states of healthy and unhealthy ego formation (Wilber, 1995). “And a truly ‘full spectrum’ approach to psychiatry and psychology would rigorously embrace both: the move from instinct to ego, as well as from ego to spirit” (p. 128).

Michael Washburn, also a philosopher whose focus is transpersonal psychology, offers a definition of transpersonal psychology in congruence with the preceding theorists:

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).

Transpersonal Psychotherapy

Vaughan (1995), a well-known transpersonal psychotherapist, is concerned with healing the whole person including the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the individual. As in traditional psychotherapy, Vaughan believes that the therapeutic relationship can provide a safe environment conducive to healing the whole person. However, while the differing forms of psychiatry and psychology have developed various modes of treatment to address mental and emotional health, the spiritual side of human nature has not been as widely studied as these other arenas.

Vaughan (1979) postulates that transpersonal psychotherapy in a therapeutic setting is characterized by: **a)** context, or the beliefs and values of the therapist; **b)** content, or the experiences of the person in counseling; and **c)** the process, which is constituted by the natural developmental processes that most people experience, and which culminates in various forms of self transcendence. As such, while transpersonal psychology is seen as “the area of psychology that focuses on the study of transpersonal experiences and related phenomena” (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993), transpersonal psychotherapy is the practice of psychotherapy that includes transpersonal dimensions in its context, content and process (Vaughan, 1979).

In agreement with Vaughan, Cortright concludes that by far the most significant ingredient in transpersonal psychotherapy is the consciousness of the therapist.

Transpersonal psychotherapy is realized via the consciousness of the therapist. It is

the therapist's own inner work with his or her consciousness that provides the psychic support for working transpersonally....It is the therapist's intention and spiritual aspiration that count most, the active inner work of seeking to contact a deeper level of Being than just the personality (Cortright, 1997, p. 57).

Ken Wilber's (1977) 'spectrum of consciousness' has had a profound impact on the field of transpersonal psychotherapy. Wilber outlines levels or stages of consciousness, each stage incorporating the one before it, leading toward an awareness of what he calls 'Mind', or an ultimate spiritual dimension as articulated by numerous mystical religious traditions. Most importantly, the implication of this model for transpersonal psychology, is that it incorporates numerous models of psychotherapy. Wilber's idea proposes that each school of psychotherapy has a useful purpose depending on the consciousness of the individual in therapy.

Boorstein's practice of transpersonal psychology embraces and builds upon the goals and techniques of more traditional psychology but expands traditional views to include the full range of human potential, including the spiritual dimension (Boorstein, 1997). As such, Boorstein is in agreement with the preceding psychotherapists.

Transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy address the broadest conceptualization possible of human psychological growth. This includes, along with comfort and gratification in one's relationship with self, family, work, and society, a recognition of the yearning for meaning, purpose, and transcendence of self-consciousness that are a part of our nature. Transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy presuppose the existence of a spiritual dimension in human beings,

and being a transpersonal therapist presupposes sharing this conviction. The field is not limited to any particular spiritual or religious system - it recognizes the validity of spiritual systems in general and the yearning for spiritual unfolding as one of the givens of human growth and development (Boorstein, 1997, p.1).

Bhakti and Karma Traditions In Transpersonal Literature

Bhakti and karma practices can be described as general sets of spiritual practices articulated within classical Hindu literature (Radhakrishnan, 1948). These paths include 'jnana yoga,' or the path of knowledge - an intellectual pathway to perfection, 'bhakti yoga' or the path of devotion and love, and 'karma yoga,' or the way of work and action with the intention of service to God ((Radhakrishnan, 1948).

Cortright (1997) offers a useful way of classifying the numerous and often confusing spiritual/religious practices that transpersonal psychotherapists articulate as contributing to psychological well-being, practices he calls 'psycho-spiritual.' In general, psycho-spiritual practices can be categorized as belonging either to the spirit path or to the soul path, or a combination of the two. Spirit paths employ mindfulness techniques, or those meditative practices that attend to the content of awareness itself without judging or becoming attached to the content of that awareness. These mindfulness techniques are most often found in nondual religious traditions such as Buddhism and some dimensions of Hinduism. Nondual traditions believe that the highest reality is impersonal and lies beyond the dual nature of creation. Buddhism believes that individuals have no soul, and that nirvana, the goal of arduous spiritual practice and innumerable incarnations, is essentially perfect emptiness or complete nothingness. A preponderance of the most

influential transpersonal writers seem to belong to the spirit path (Kornfield, 1993; Vaughan, 1995; Walsh, 1983; Welwood, 1996; Wilber, 1997).

Practices employed by soul paths are devotional in nature, and include bhakti (devotion or love), surrender and prayer. Soul paths tend to be theistic, where the highest reality is seen as both a personal and an impersonal Divine Being or God. Soul paths can be characterized as bhakti in orientation, and focus on increasing one's relationship with the divine, through practices that increase devotion and love.

As mentioned above, my scanning of transpersonal literature over the past thirty years revealed the relative absence of the soul path perspective compared to the predominance of spirit path approach. In the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, (the publication where the foundational articles of Wilber, Vaughan, Walsh, Whitine, Welwood, Welwood, and other transpersonal authors first appeared), only one article specifically focusing on the path of love or bhakti (Welwood, 1985) and no articles addressing the path of service or karma can be found since its inception in 1969.

Karma practices focus on expressing a spiritual life through service to other people (Ram Dass & Gorman, 1985). Such a life of service can take any form imaginable and can open the individual to a greater sense of unity with all life, in which "the spirit of service asks us to touch and act from a deeper place, a chord of the heart that responds to life out of connectedness and compassion, independently of results" (Kornfield, 1993, p. 280). As with bhakti practices, it would be difficult for readers to find much written about the path of service or karma in the work of the most prominent transpersonal writers.

Purpose Of The Study

The purpose of this study was to discover and explore the impact of both the bhakti and karma practices associated with following a spiritual path dedicated to the late 20th century spiritual personality Meher Baba on the lives and work of three practicing transpersonal psychotherapists, based upon their self understanding. As Meher Baba is an example and modern proponent of both bhakti and karma practices, this focus on the lives and work of psychotherapists who experience such a path is intended to provide a rich source of experiential information. It is envisioned that this information will be useful in beginning to develop an understanding of the effects that both bhakti and karma practices have on people's lives, as well as the therapeutic applications such practices may have in psychotherapeutic settings.

The assumption of this research is that the inclusion of bhakti and karma traditions in the theory and practice of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy is vital to a more complete understanding of transpersonal experience and therefore transpersonal psychology. Ultimately, this information is intended to contribute to grounded theory building in the field of transpersonal psychology regarding the impact bhakti and karma practices have on an individual's psychological well-being. In addition, such a theory is intended to have an impact on counselor education by focusing attention on the importance of including the spiritual dimension peoples lives within the therapeutic setting.

As the researcher, I have an abiding interest in this issue, and identify myself as twenty-seven year follower of the bhakti/karma practices of Meher. I have also traveled to India over a dozen times to participate in activities at Meher Baba's main Indian center. In this regard, my spiritual identity and world view have been thoroughly informed and influenced by the life and work of Meher Baba. Additionally, I have been a active participant in numerous projects and functions in the "Meher Baba world" and am familiar with many, if not most, of the 5,000-6,000 followers in the United States.

Grand Questions

Given the 'statement of problem' and 'purpose of the study', I investigated two broad questions, with each question containing several sub-questions. As this research design is qualitative in nature, it is concerned with how the participants studied assign meaning to experiences they have in their lives (Bogdan & Bilken).

- 1) What has the impact of the participant's spiritual experiences, including their ongoing practices (bhakti and karma), been on their personal life?
 - A) How did they enter into their spiritual life?
 - B) How would they describe the spiritual practices they engage in as a regular part of that life?
 - C) What ongoing effect do these practices have on their daily life?
 - D) How would they describe the daily experience of their spiritual life?
- 2) What has the impact of the participant's spiritual experiences, including their ongoing practices (bhakti and karma) been on their professional psychotherapeutic practice?

- A) What is the nature of the participant's psychotherapeutic practice?
- B) Who are their clients?
- C) Do they focus on their client's spiritual or religious life?
- D) How has the participant's spiritual life influenced their psychotherapeutic practice?
- E) How does the participant's therapeutic practice influence their spiritual life?

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative case study approach. Qualitative research is concerned with ways people make 'meaning' out of their lives, how they see things from their own unique point of view (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992). It is descriptive in nature and focuses on the intensive study of specific subject areas (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). That is, the data collected is in the form of words that describe how the participant understands the topic being investigated. "This means that qualitative researchers study things in their own natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2).

As this study is concerned with the self-understanding the three selected transpersonal therapists place upon their own spiritual and professional lives, qualitative research is a particularly suitable design. The primary methodological tool consisted of a case study approach, in this instance multiple case studies, using semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interview process has been traditionally used to explore a few general topics in order to uncover the participants' own meaning and perspective, while at the

same time respecting how the participants frame and structure their responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Stake (1995) refers to in-depth interviews as “the main road to multiple realities” (p. 64).

Additionally, this study utilized the constant comparative method in analyzing the data (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). I used both within-case displays to draw out prominent themes, and cross-case displays to scrutinize the data for similarities and differences between participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). ‘Member checking,’ a process used to verify the information with the participants, was employed to confirm the accuracy of the data from the interviewees’ point of view. Next, I synthesized the categories of beliefs and behavior of the participants into themes in order to generate a picture of the influence that bhakti/karma practices have had on the interviewees’ personal and professional lives. Finally, the results from this analysis were matched with the pertinent and appropriate categories found in current transpersonal literature. This process was intended to lead to supporting the development and articulation of a complete theory of bhakti/karma practices in transpersonal literature.

Definitions Of Terms

Avatar: The term ‘Avatar’, as it appears in this paper is defined through its specific use by Meher Baba (see below). The Avatar is a soul who has become one with God and who incarnates as a human being to help others achieve this same goal (Meher Baba, 1967). Through the force of his nature as one with God, he achieves this by bringing about a general spiritual rebirth in humanity.

Bhakti Practices: Bhakti can be defined as various forms of spiritual practice which are considered devotional in nature, and which usually have some form of deity personal or impersonal, as the object of worship. Practices including prayer, music, contemplation, and most of all love, are all normally associated with bhakti, and are meant to help the individual deepen their connection with the Divine (Cortright, 1997).

Karma Practices: Karma can be defined as various forms of spiritual practice which are associated with service, specifically 'self-less service' (Meher Baba, 1967). Like bhakti expressions, the purpose of spiritual practices devoted to service is to move the individual close to an experience of unity with the Divine (Ram Dass & Gorman, 1985). Service can take any form, from the smallest act to the most exalted. It is the intention behind the act that matters most.

Meher Baba: The Indian spiritual personality, Meher Baba (1894-1969), is regarded by many thousands of people throughout the world as their spiritual master (Purdom, 1964). His approach to spirituality can be considered a mixture of classical Hinduism, Sufism (the mystical dimension of Islam), and Christian mysticism (Meher Baba, 1955). He believed that each human being has a soul, that the soul is on a journey toward oneness with God, and that the soul reincarnates many times while striving to realize this goal. The path he recommended to his followers consists of love for God and service to humanity (Meher Baba, 1967).

In the 1920's, Meher Baba's spiritual work led him to establish an ashram or spiritual colony which he called Meherabad, which is still functioning today. Here he maintained a free hospital and medical dispensary for the poor and free schools. In his

ashram he made no distinction between different castes or religions, all lived together in common fellowship, a radical notion for the times. On July 10, 1925, Meher Baba began to observe silence. At first he used an alphabet board with English letters to communicate, and later developed a unique set of hand gestures. After 1925, Meher Baba never spoke again. He stated that his silence was not undertaken as a practice in order to achieve some spiritual experience or state (Purdom, 1964). Rather, he was straightforward in his claim that he had achieved the highest spiritual state possible – union with God. In his role as Avatar (see above), he maintained that his work was to help others achieve their innate potential of oneness with God.

He traveled to the Western world six times from 1931 to 1958. In addition to the retreat in Meherabad, India, he also founded spiritual centers in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and in Australia. In addition to traveling in the West, he went all over India contacting countless people. At such times, as many as 100,000 people would come for his blessing.

Psycho-spiritual Practices: The term ‘psycho-spiritual practices’ has been developed by Cortright (1997) to distinguish between two broad categories of approaches to spirituality, including the psychological dimensions of those approaches: spirit paths and soul paths. Spirit paths employ mindfulness techniques, meditative practices that attend to the content of awareness itself without judging or becoming attached to the content of that awareness. These mindfulness techniques are most often found in nondual religious traditions such as Buddhism and some dimensions of Hinduism. Nondual traditions believe that the highest reality is impersonal and lies beyond the dual nature of

creation. Practices employed by soul paths are devotional in nature, and include bhakti (devotion or love), surrender and prayer. Soul paths tend to be theistic, where the highest reality is seen as both a personal and an impersonal Divine Being or God, and the focus is on increasing one's relationship with the divine, through practices that evoke devotion and love (Cortright 1997). Practitioners of soul paths can be found in various forms of Hinduism, Christianity and Sufism.

Transpersonal Psychology: This study will use the definition formulated by Walsh and Vaughan, who describe transpersonal psychology as “the area of psychology that focuses on the study of transpersonal experiences and related phenomena. These phenomena include the causes, effects and correlates of transpersonal experiences and development, as well as the disciplines and practices inspired by them” (Walsh & Vaughan 1993, p. 203). Crucial to this description is the meaning given to transpersonal experiences “as experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche or cosmos” (203).

Transpersonal Psychotherapy: Drawing again upon the work of Vaughan (1979), transpersonal psychotherapy in a therapeutic setting is characterized by: a) context, or the beliefs and values of the therapist; b) content, or the experiences of the person in counseling; and c) the process, which is constituted in part by the natural developmental processes involving ego formation that most people experience but which additionally moves beyond traditional ideas of ego health reaching into various forms of self transcendence. Most importantly, it is the theoretical and methodological framework, not

technique, that informs the therapeutic process and is most important in defining transpersonal psychotherapy. Indeed, all techniques, from any school of psychotherapy or psychology, can be considered transpersonal if the transpersonal framework is in place. And by far the most significant ingredient of this framework is the consciousness of the therapist Vaughan (1979).

Delimitations and Limitations of The Study:

This study was delimited in the following fashion: three self-defined transpersonal psychotherapists, who follow a particular spiritual path possessing bhakti/karma attributes, were asked to self-report how their spiritual practices impact upon both their personal and profession lives. The research took place over a four month period from September to December 1998. The reader must decide the extent to which information from these participants may be generalized or applied to other groups of therapists who follow similar bhakti/karma paths, as that is not the intent of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

A Selected Review of Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present: (a) a definition of transpersonal psychology as articulated through the work of those theorists most often noted by transpersonal authors as being the most influential in the field (b) a definition of transpersonal psychotherapy as presented through the work of those theorists most often noted by transpersonal authors as being the most influential in the field (c) a demonstration of the relative absence of both the ‘bhakti’ and ‘karma’ traditions from the theoretical orientation underlying transpersonal literature (d) an introduction of the spiritual views of the 20th century figure Meher Baba on both bhakti and karma approaches to spiritual practices; and (e) the implications a grounded theory on bhakti and karma approaches may have on counselor education.

In order for the field of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy to be truly inclusive in its theoretical orientation, a clear description of both the bhakti and karma yoga paths is needed. It is the intention of this chapter to demonstrate the relative absence of these orientations in the dominant transpersonal literature, and to provide a description of these important spiritual perspectives.

Transpersonal Psychology

The field of transpersonal psychology has been experiencing unusual growth in recent years, including an expansion and broadening of both theory and practice

(Cortright, 1997). Not surprisingly, several notable articles and books have been written attempting to synthesize and standardize the numerous definitions that comprise the underlying assumptions of transpersonal psychology (Cortright, 1997; Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992; Walsh, 1993; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993; Wilber, 1995). A seminal article in the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology by Walsh and Vaughan (1993) defines transpersonal psychology as “the area of psychology that focuses on the study of transpersonal experiences and related phenomena. These phenomena include the causes, effects and correlates of transpersonal experiences and development, as well as the disciplines and practices inspired by them” (p. 203). Crucial to this description is the meaning given to transpersonal experiences “as experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche or cosmos” (p. 203).

In formulating this definition, an effort was made to minimize ties to particular theological, philosophical or theoretical presuppositions. As such, this description is not meant to bind practitioners to any particular interpretation of what can or cannot be considered a transpersonal experience. As the definition focuses on experiences rather than a particular theoretical or spiritual understanding, it allows for a wide variety of interpretations, religious or nonreligious.

Developed in reaction to the theory-heavy constructs of the past, this definition is also an attempt to include the various ways transpersonal psychology is studied and articulated. These include various spiritual or religious points of views, ultimate dimensions of human experience, altered states of consciousness, and psychological

health and well-being. It is clear, however, that the major contributors to theory building in transpersonal psychology have all incorporated a religious or spiritual dimension into their approaches: Jung (1938), Wilber (1997), Vaughan (1985), Walsh (1993), and Washburn (1994) . One recent comprehensive overview of the theory and practice of transpersonal psychotherapy defines transpersonal psychology “as the melding of the wisdom of the world’s spiritual traditions with the learning of modern psychology” (Cortright, 1997).

It is the world’s spiritual traditions and modern psychology that provide the two most interesting and compelling answers to the fundamental question human beings have asked throughout the ages, ‘Who am I?’ In reply to this question, the world’s spiritual traditions look deep within and respond, ‘A spiritual being, a soul,’ and religious practices are the means by which spiritual traditions seek to connect to this deeper identity within. On the other hand, modern psychology has arrived at a very different answer to the question, ‘Who am I?’ Psychology looks within and gives the answer, ‘A self, an ego, a psychological existence,’ and depth psychology is psychology’s journey into the reclaiming, healing, and growth of this self.

Transpersonal psychology is an attempt to put these two answers together.

(p. 8)

Often cited as providing the philosophical underpinning to transpersonal psychology is Aldous Huxley’s *‘philosophia perennis’* (perennial philosophy) (Cortright, 1997; Vaughan, 1995; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993; Wilber 1997; Wittine, 1993). Huxley’s (1945) view is that at the core of all higher religions is a ‘Highest Common Factor,’ an

ineffable and transcendent truth that has been expressed throughout history. This “divine Reality” or “divine Ground,” as Huxley refers to it, provides the substance and basis for all beings and things in the world, is identical with the human soul, and the knowledge of which is the goal of human life. The philosophia perennis is:

...the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man’s final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being - the thing is immemorial and universal (Huxley, 1945, vii).

And:

The divine Ground of all existence is a spiritual Absolute, ineffable in terms of discursive thought, but (in certain circumstances) susceptible of being directly experienced and realized by the human being. This Absolute is the God-without-form of Hindu and Christian mystical phraseology. The last end of man, the ultimate reason for human existence, is unitive knowledge of the divine Ground - the knowledge that can come only to those who are prepared to “die to self” and so make room, as it were, for God (Huxley, 1945, p. 21).

Transpersonal philosopher Ken Wilber (1997) explains the perennial philosophy in this way:

To begin with, when we speak of the ‘Ancient Wisdom’ as the philosophia perennis, there can properly be only one correct meaning, namely, those truths - or rather, That Truth - which is radically timeless or eternal, one and whole, only and

all. That Truth - using “Truth” in the broadest sense as the ultimately Real or Spirit itself - is the essence of the perennial philosophy (p.59).

In addition, in all religious traditions, states Huxley, there have been “incarnations of God in a human being (Huxley, 1945, p. 21).” That is, human beings have existed, and do exist, who embody the absolute Reality. For Christians there has been only one, for Indians there have been many (Huxley, 1945).

The perennial philosophy, by recognizing a universal reality or divine ground that pervades all of existence, and which is considered the highest common factor beneath all religious and spiritual traditions, provides a useful overarching framework for accepting a wide variety of religious and spiritual approaches and experiences, while not dogmatically adhering to any one particular religion’s theology or set of practices (Wilber, 1997). Additionally, by articulating that the divine ground dwells within each person, and the knowledge of which constitutes the purpose of life, the perennial philosophy lays the foundation for placing the spiritual dimension of human existence within the center of psychological inquiry and practice. If the divine lies within each person, then it is part of what composes the human psyche, and is a subject to be properly explored and understood. And finally, if the goal of life is for each person to realize a unitive connection with the divine ground, then this indwelling reality is a powerful resource for psychological growth and development (Cortright, 1997).

Carl Jung, a seminal figure in the history of Western psychology, was one of the first psychotherapists to articulate the importance of taking seriously transpersonal and religious experiences as they relate to psychological health (Boorstein, 1996; Brookes,

1996; Cortright, 1997; Vaughan, 1995; Washburn, 1994; Wilber, 1995). Jung is considered by some to be the first truly transpersonal psychologist (Brookes, 1996; Cortright, 1997). Jung believed that transpersonal and religious experiences arose out of each person's "collective unconscious," and identified the unique emotional quality of the transpersonal as 'numinosity' (Jaffe, 1975, p. 37).

Building upon the work of his mentor Sigmund Freud, Jung was convinced of the importance of exploring the unconscious for both the origin and resolution of mental illness (Bennet, 1983). Eventually, Jung came to the conclusion that each individual possesses both a personal and collective unconscious. The personal unconscious consists of the repressed and forgotten experiences of childhood (Jaffe, 1975). These experiences were painful, unhappy and unacceptable incidents that when repressed came to form what Jung called 'complexes' in the personal unconscious (Bennet, 1983). Importantly, Jung also discovered that the unconscious seemed to act autonomously from the motivations of the conscious mind. The collective unconscious is described as a boundless realm hidden from ego consciousness (Jaffe, 1975). Unlike the personal unconsciousness, the collective unconsciousness is not unique to the individual but instead is a reservoir of consciousness shared by and accessible to all of humanity (Bennet, 1983).

Jung laid considerable emphasis upon the universal character of the collective unconscious: "...it has contents that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a supra-personal nature which is present in every one of us" (p. 66).

The collective unconscious is inherited, and while the personal unconscious is comprised mainly of complexes, the collective unconscious consists of ‘archetypes,’ which are pre-existent or original forms (1983). At one point Jung refers to the archetypes as “patterns of instinctual behavior. The hypothesis of the collective unconscious is, therefore, no more daring than to assume there are instincts” (Jung, 1971, p. 61). Practically speaking, archetypes, as universal forms, influence and shape the psyche and generally organize psychological experience. Archetypes cannot be experienced directly but only indirectly through symbolic material gathered from dreams, fantasies, ‘active imagination’ (a technique employed by Jung), or other vehicles carrying material from the unconscious. Examples of archetypes include the ‘wise old man’, the shadow (which includes the contents of the personal unconscious), the ‘mother’, the ‘anima’ (unconscious feminine side of man), and the ‘animus’ (the unconscious masculine side of woman). While Jung generally referred to archetypical images as instincts, he would at other times ascribe a spiritual or numinous quality to them (Jaffe, 1971). The archetype he identified as central to psychological growth - a process he referred to as ‘individuation’ or ‘wholeness’ - was that of the ‘self’ (Jung, 1959). At the same time, he used the archetype of the self arising out of the unconscious as an expression of the spiritual or religious dimension of life, which on a transcendent level was an expression of complete wholeness.

I have found myself obliged to give the corresponding archetype the psychological name of the ‘self’ - a term on the one hand definite enough to convey the essence of

human wholeness and on the other hand indefinite enough to express the indescribable and indeterminable nature of this wholeness. The paradoxical qualities of the term are in keeping with the fact that wholeness consists partly of the conscious man and partly of the unconscious man. But we cannot define the latter or indicate his boundaries. Hence in its scientific usage the term 'self' refers neither to Christ nor to Buddha but to the totality of the figures that are its equivalent, and each of these figures is a symbol of the self (pp. 448-449).

The image of the self encompasses both the conscious and unconscious, both instinctual and spiritual. Jung ultimately speaks of the archetype of the self as the God-image (Fordham, 1953). "The experience of the self is archetypal, and it is portrayed in dreams and visions by many and varied images, all of which may be called archetypes of the self" (p. 64).

As mentioned above, central to Jung's view of psychological health is the idea of wholeness or individuation. Jung believed that in every person there was a natural drive towards individuation, which includes consciously bringing together and integrating the varied parts of the individual - the conscious ego, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious - to form a new and ever developing whole self (Jung, 1959).

The concept of individuation plays no small role in our psychology. In general, it is the process of forming and specializing the individual nature; in particular, it is the development of the psychological individual as a differentiated being from the general, collective psychology. Individuation, therefore, is a process of differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual personality. (p.

259)

Psychological health is facilitated when the individual consciously allows archetypal energy to arise from the unconscious through symbols, dreams and images, and then actively uses these images to help shape thoughts, feelings, and actions (Cortright, 1997, p. 82). In this regard, the chief archetype of the self offers guidance and insight to the conscious ego concerning new psychological integration, movement and direction. And as the person moves in new inner and outer directions, the images that arise from the self begin to change and, in turn, offer new insights and possibilities. “If the person does not listen to this inner movement, he or she will experience increasing psychic pain, emptiness and alienation” (Cortright, 1997, p. 83).

Jung included the spiritual dimension to his psychological work with patients and, as a result, helped set the tone for subsequent psychologists and psychotherapists to consider wider possibilities of interpretation and treatment in their theoretical and clinical endeavors. Indeed, Jung believed that the individual’s psychic health and stability depended on the proper expression of “his natural religious function” (Fordham, 1953, p. 69).

Unquestionably the most influential philosopher and theorist of transpersonal psychology since the formal inception of the field in the early 1970's, Ken Wilber has provided the major theoretical underpinnings of the developing discipline (Boorstein, 1996; Cortright, 1997; Vaughan, 1995; Walsh, 1993; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993). Wilber offers a definition of transpersonal psychology similar to Walsh, Vaughan and Cortright, emphasizing the spiritual/religious dimension. Spiritual traditions, asserts Wilber, have

excelled at the understanding and promotion of human growth from the standpoint of a healthy ego, but it is Western psychology that has provided an understanding of the stages and states of healthy and unhealthy ego formation (Wilber, 1995) “And a truly ‘full spectrum’ approach to psychiatry and psychology would rigorously embrace both: the move from instinct to ego, as well as from ego to spirit” (p. 128).

...the job of Transpersonal Psychology is to build upon that orthodoxy foundation [traditional schools of psychology] a more comprehensive, viable, and adequate psychology, one that includes not only mind and body but soul and spirit. (Wilber, 1997, p. xi)

Michael Washburn, also a philosopher whose focus is transpersonal psychology, offers the only significant alternative to Wilber’s nondual (Eastern thought) approach to interpreting the spiritual processes of human experience (Cortright, 1997). Like Wilber, Washburn’s approach is spiritual/religious in nature, but he considers himself Jungian, Western, and more theistic-relational in orientation. At the same time, his definition of transpersonal psychology finds a great deal of congruence with the preceding theorists:

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).

As mentioned above, Washburn’s approach is more Western and theistic-relational in nature than Wilber’s. The major difference between the nondual and theistic

approaches is in how each views the idea of transcendence. In Wilber's nondual approach transcendence means going beyond the self to a state of no self. The theistic approach sees the self becoming part of a higher unity of being where the self is not eliminated but rather is transformed and included in a higher state of awareness (1988).

A major focus of Washburn's work to addresses the lack of an adequate theory of ego development in both analytical psychology and transpersonal psychology (Washburn, 1994).

Transpersonal Psychotherapy

Vaughan (1995), one of the most influential practitioner/writer transpersonal psychotherapists (Cortright, 1997), is concerned with healing the whole person including the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the individual. As in traditional psychotherapy, Vaughan believes that the therapeutic relationship can provide a safe environment conducive to healing the whole person. However, while the differing forms of psychiatry and psychology have developed various modes of treatment to address mental and emotional health, the spiritual side of human nature has not been as widely studied as these other arenas.

Vaughan defines spiritual well-being as "a sense of inner peace, compassion for others, reverence for life, gratitude, and appreciation of both unity and diversity. Healthy spirituality also implies qualities such as humor, wisdom, generosity, and a capacity for nonattachment, self-transcendence, and unconditional love" (Vaughan, 1995, pp. 20-21). Spiritual health is cultivated out of what Vaughan calls the "transpersonal Self" (p. 39). A term borrowed from Jung, the transpersonal Self, or Self, is an internal sense that

transcends the normal bounds of the ego, and in some way experiences the “Absolute Spirit” or what perennial philosophy refers to as the ‘ground of being’ or the ‘ultimate wholeness’ (but, for Vaughan, this does not mean a personal Deity). The Self has a certain inner detachment with what is being experienced by the individual, and remains more the experiencer than that which is being experienced. One of the qualities of the Self is that it is able to develop “healing awareness,” qualities of consciousness that enter into the individual’s inner psychic workings once the transpersonal self is awakened. These qualities include humor, wisdom, generosity, and the other attributes mentioned above in connection with the transpersonal self. Such experiences can precipitate a healing effect to all sides of the psyche, mitigating physical, mental, emotional and spiritual maladies (1995).

Vaughan (1979) concludes that transpersonal psychotherapy in a therapeutic setting is characterized by: a) context, or the beliefs and values of the therapist; b) content, or the experiences of the person in counseling; and, c) the process, which is constituted by the natural developmental processes that most people experience, and which culminates in various forms of self transcendence.

“Transpersonal psychology,” says Cortright, “views all psychological processes against the backdrop of spiritual unfolding” (1997, p. 22). Moreover, it is the theoretical and methodological framework, not technique, that informs the therapeutic process, and which is most important in defining transpersonal psychotherapy. Indeed, all techniques, from any school of psychotherapy or psychology, can be considered transpersonal if the transpersonal framework is in place. And, by far the most significant ingredient of this

framework is the consciousness of the therapist. (Cortright, 1997)

A therapist may use an approach that is informed by a behavioral, psychoanalytic, or humanistic orientation (ideally a therapist is open to all theoretical models, though in practice most therapists tend to favor one), but transpersonal therapy proceeds by no set technique or formula. Transpersonal therapy lies not in what the therapist says or does, but in the silent frame that operates behind the therapist's actions, informing and giving meaning to the specific interventions [italics added] (Cortright, 1997, pp. 15-16).

And:

Transpersonal psychotherapy is realized via the consciousness of the therapist. It is the therapist's own inner work with his or her consciousness that provides the psychic support for working transpersonally....It is the therapist's intention and spiritual aspiration that count most, the active inner work of seeking to contact a deeper level of Being than just the personality (p. 57).

In the therapeutic process, consciousness is equal to growth and ultimately to health.

Transpersonal psychotherapy is concerned with exploring what helps or hinders health and the expansion of consciousness. "From a transpersonal perspective, consciousness heals" (Cortright, 1997, p. 56).

Whitine, another key figure in transpersonal psychotherapy, sees the transpersonal approach as a tool for healing and growth - an outlook he shares with Vaughan, Cortright, and all other transpersonal psychotherapists. Like other transpersonalists, his views are based upon the perennial philosophy articulated by Huxley. Whitine's (1993) five

postulates include:

1. Transpersonal psychotherapy is an approach to healing/growth which recognizes the centrality of the Self in the therapeutic process.
2. Transpersonal psychotherapy values wholeness of being and self-realization on all levels of the spectrum of identity - egoic, existential, and transpersonal.
3. Transpersonal psychotherapy is a process of awakening from a lesser to a greater identity.
4. Transpersonal psychotherapy makes use of the healing, restorative nature of subjective awareness and intuition in the process of awakening.
5. In transpersonal psychotherapy, the therapeutic relationship is a vehicle for the process of awakening in both client and therapist.

While Ken Wilber is not a practicing psychotherapist, his concept of the 'spectrum of consciousness' (1977) has had a profound impact on the field of transpersonal psychotherapy. Based upon the perennial philosophy, Wilber outlines levels or stages of consciousness, each stage incorporating the one before it, leading toward an awareness of what he calls 'Mind,' or an ultimate spiritual dimension as articulated by numerous mystical or higher religious traditions.

An understanding of the concept of 'dualism,' as Wilber describes it, is fundamental when approaching his spectrum of consciousness. Mind, according to Wilber, is the manifestation of the ultimate reality and, in fact, is the only reality. All else in creation is an expression of dualism, and is essentially illusory - not so much unreal, but simply not reality (Wilber, 1993). The basic concept of dualism is found in the

perennial philosophy, and is based on the Hindu idea of ‘maya.’ “Maya is any experience constituted by or stemming from dualism (specifically, the primary dualism of subject vs. object)” (Wilber, 1993, p. 25). Dualism is experienced on a human level in various ways including, the separation between: subject and object, seer and the seen, self and other, and body and environment. Wilber explains it this way:

The original dualism or act of severance is mythologically referred to by the perennial philosophy as the separation of Heaven and Earth, Male and Female, Sun and Moon; epistemologically, it is the separation of subject and object, knower and known, observer and observed; ontologically, it is the separation of self and other, organism and environment. For our purposes, the most convenient labels for the two halves of this original dualism are subject and object, self and other, or simply organism and environment, for with its occurrence, human identity apparently (not actually) shifts from the nondual All to the organism. (Wilber, 1993, p. 25)

There are four primary levels leading up to the final stage of Mind. Each stage is characterized by some type of split or schism in the individual that needs to be healed in order for the deepest stage of Mind to be fully realized. These schisms are various forms of dualism, which are experienced, says Wilber, as ‘boundaries’ that eventually need to be dissolved in order for consciousness to evolve. In his work No Boundary (1979), Wilber speaks of this progressive movement along the spectrum of consciousness as a descent into deeper levels. “This descent can be usefully described in all sorts of ways, from harmonizing opposites to ‘expanding’ consciousness to transcending complexes, but most fundamentally this descent is a simple dissolving of boundaries (Wilber , 1979, p.

88).”

Shadow Level: Characterized by a split in consciousness between the persona, or the outer part of the ego seen by the world, and the shadow, a Jungian term which describes the hurtful or forbidden experiences which we repress from childhood.

Ego Level: Characterized by a schism between the ego, or the unified shadow and persona consciousness of the previous level, and the body (soma) or our physical being.

Existential Level: Characterized by a split between the unified ego/body consciousness or the organism and the environment, that is to say, all things in nature that lie outside the organism.

Transpersonal Bands: Between the existential and the mind levels, Wilber describes an interim area he calls the transpersonal bands. Here, we find a bridge between the world we normally experience, which Eastern religions describe as a ‘dual nature,’ including the splits we experience in consciousness and the mind, or the unified consciousness with the divine (or the universe as Wilber sometime calls it).

Mind Level: Here all splits vanish with the experience of the spiritual dimension.

In Wilber’s model, pathology is defined by the fractures or boundaries we experience in our consciousness all along the spectrum (1977). Seen from this perspective, it is entirely natural that all people experience some form of “pathology” as each struggles toward finding a unified interior experience of their innate eternal nature. Therefore, the goal of psychotherapy is to heal the schisms in consciousness experienced on each level of the spectrum.

The psychotherapist should assume various roles, depending on the type of

therapy employed (1979). As will be demonstrated below, every school of therapy can be accommodated in this transpersonal model; therefore, many types of therapeutic relationships can occur. Primarily, the therapist is seen as a fellow traveler on the path of consciousness toward the universal. As such, the therapist helps guide the individual in healing the essential fractures in consciousness, and encourages, when appropriate, an openness to the healing possibilities of the spiritual dimension of human nature.

Wilber (1979) outlines where the various schools of therapy fit into his spectrum. Shadow level therapies seek to help the individuals maintain some balance or remediation in their exterior world, by offering supportive counseling to help move them into the ego level. Ego level therapies are concerned with healing the shadow/persona dualism or split characterized by the shadow level. The goal is to bring unconscious material dwelling in the shadow into consciousness, where this material can be integrated into the personality, which in turn will be helpful in moving the individual onto the existential level. Therapies on the ego level include: psychoanalysis, psychodrama, reality therapy, ego therapies and transactional analysis. Existential level therapies are concerned with healing the ego/body dualism or split characterized by the ego level. The goal is to fully integrate the body and mind into the individual's consciousness, helping the individual move toward the transpersonal level. These therapies include: existential therapy, logo therapy, Gestalt therapy, Rogerian therapy, and other humanistic therapies. Transpersonal bands therapies help to heal the organism/environment split characterized by the existential level, aiding the person to move on to the mind level. These schools of therapy includes: Jungian therapy, dream therapy, meditation, holotropic breath work

(Grof, 1989), and psychosynthesis. Mind level therapies focus on the work of unifying consciousness by transcending the duality and boundaries of the preceding levels. Here Wilber recommends the practices of the various mystical traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Sufism, mystical Christianity, Taoism, etc. While these are clearly not schools of psychotherapy, Wilber offers them as the highest form of consciousness, which naturally include both the psychological and spiritual dimensions (1979).

John Welwood is a transpersonal psychotherapist who describes himself as an existential therapist (Welwood, 1983) and a Buddhist meditator (Welwood, 1997). He has written a great deal both about the value of meditation and about intimate relationships as a sacred spiritual path (Welwood, 1990). Like Vaughan, Cortright, Whitine, and Wilber, he believes in the healing power of transpersonal experiences.

Welwood sees psychological distress as the result having turned away from experiences that caused pain during development, “such as anger, or need for love, our vulnerability, our will, our sexuality” (Welwood, 1992, p. 160). Unable to endure the pain of such experiences, we subsequently withdrew our awareness from them, “contracting our awareness,” shutting ourselves down out of a deep sense of fear.

For instance, if our need for love was frustrated, the overwhelming pain of feeling this need caused us to contract. Because we never learned how to open to that pain, our need still feels overwhelming whenever it arises. And so we still contract against it. In this way we become disabled, unable to function in certain areas of our lives. Turning away from our pain also creates a second, more ongoing form of suffering: living in a state of contraction. (Welwood, 1992, p. 160)

As we contract from painful episodes, we gradually cultivate a style of avoidance and denial, developing a whole skewed identity based on rejecting deleterious aspects of our lives. Such an identity does not include the whole of who we are, says Welwood, and eventually we will need to come to terms not only with past distressful experiences but with ones yet to come. At the deepest levels of our humanity, we possess an innate need to remain open to experience whatever life brings us.

Thus our psychological distress is composed of at least three elements: the basic pain of feelings that seem threatening and overwhelming; the contracting of awareness to avoid this pain; and the stress of continually having to prop up and defend an identity based on this avoidance and denial. (Welwood, 1992, p. 161)

The essential nature of our being is what Welwood calls “unconditional openness” (p. 162). To reach this openness, we must first face our pain, and use it as an agent of healing. The way to do this is to be present to ourselves, and to accept whatever arises from within us. We must be unconditionally present. “To be unconditionally present with our experience is the simplest thing we could possibly do. It means being present to what is, facing it as it is, without relying on any view or concept about it” (Welwood, 1992, p. 164).

Unconditional presence is essential for healing because it allows us to see or understand our contractedness and feel its impact on our body. It is not enough just to see, not enough just to feel. We must see and feel. Of course, it may take months or years to clearly see and feel a pattern we are stuck in. But when this finally happens, we begin to develop the resources necessary to overcome whatever

problem we are facing. (Welwood, 1992, 9. 167)

A client begins to find unconditional presence by learning to focus, or by developing what Welwood calls a “felt sense” (1983, p. 44) of a certain situation or inner conflict. A felt sense is a more full way of knowing something. “It is concretely felt - in the body - as a sense - something not yet cognitively clear or distinct” (p. 44). This felt sense is the first step in a more complete unfolding and uncovering of the situation. Focusing on this wider sense of an experience, and then uncovering its meaning can lead to valuable therapeutic change.

Welwood (1983) recommends mindfulness meditation as one of the best tools for trainers and healers in achieving a condition of being present in themselves. Meditation allows the individual to go directly to the heart of their inner confusion or fear arising from our experiences. Welwood sees three primary differences between psychotherapy and meditation (pp. 46-49):

1. Expanding identity or letting go of identity: The primary task of psychotherapy is to help us expand the sense of who we are, our ‘I,’ our ego, by incorporating unconscious parts of ourselves which have been experienced as alien. Meditation looks into what the ‘I’ consists of, discovering what is beneath our impulses, and then eventually helps us let go of their grip on the psyche.

2. Building meaning structure or dissolving meaning-structures:

Psychotherapy takes the question ‘who am I?’ seriously by looking to the unconscious to help unscramble and clarify the web of unconscious scripts that cause people distress. It works on building ego strength and meaning. At the same time, psychotherapy “does not

generally provide a path for accessing or deepening the larger sense of freedom and aliveness that arises in a moment of shift and opening, when old scripts and story-lines fall away” (Welwood, 1983, p. 98). Meditation, on the other hand, can provide a way to this larger sense of aliveness. It can provide pure and expansive moments of being present and free of personal entanglements.

3. Goal orientation or letting be: Psychotherapy is necessarily goal oriented and focused on solving personal problems or coming to terms with internal or external forces that are causing unhappiness. Meditation, or mindfulness meditation, as Welwood recommends, is not goal-oriented. Its focus is no focus at all. Rather, it provides a place where the individual can simply ‘be,’ just as they are, open to discovering their basic nature.

At the same time, the common ground between psychotherapy and meditation is found in the Buddhist term ‘maitri’ (Welwood, 1983). Welwood defines maitri as “unconditional friendliness to ourselves”. It means embracing ourselves unconditionally, and allowing the ‘shoulds’ and ‘musts’ to fall away from our overly conditioned view of the kind of person we need to be in order to become acceptable to ourselves.

While Welwood (1983) recommends “mindfulness meditation” to psychotherapists, he does not generally prescribe it for clients. This is partly because they do not come to him for meditation, and partly because they are generally not ready for it. The lack of readiness in clients may be due to weak ego strength or the need to face certain developmental tasks (p. 53).

Welwood has also written a great deal about intimate relationships between two people as a sacred path. The “central concern is with cultivating a conscious love, which can inspire the development of greater awareness and the evolution of two people’s beings (Welwood, 1993, p. 236).” Two people’s love for one another can lead them beyond themselves to an expansive feeling of connection to all of life.

From a therapeutic perspective “intimate relationships can help free us from our conditioning by allowing us to see exactly how and where we are stuck. They continually bring us up against things in ourselves that we cannot stand (Welwood, 1990, p. 18).” Then, through a shared conscious love for one another, these stuck places can be faced and their grip on us loosens.

Another well-known transpersonal psychotherapist, Seymour Boorstein, is a classically-trained Freudian psychoanalyst, who considers himself a transpersonal or spiritual therapist. Boorstein has brought together the insights of self psychology with a transpersonal orientation (1997). Transpersonal psychology is seen as embracing and building upon the goals and techniques of more traditional psychology but expands traditional views to include the full range of human potential, including the spiritual dimension. Again, Boorstein is in agreement with the preceding psychotherapists.

Transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy address the broadest conceptualization possible of human psychological growth. This includes, along with comfort and gratification in one’s relationship with self, family, work, and society, a recognition of the yearning for meaning, purpose, and transcendence of

self-consciousness that are a part of our nature. Transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy presuppose the existence of a spiritual dimension in human beings, and being a transpersonal therapist presupposes sharing this conviction. The field is not limited to any particular spiritual or religious system - it recognizes the validity of spiritual systems in general and the yearning for spiritual unfolding as one of the givens of human growth and development. (Boorstein, 1997, p. 1)

Traditional psychotherapy, says Boorstein, is concerned either with building ego strength where a lack of development has occurred, or with repairing ego damage caused by the consequences of abuse or neglect. Transpersonal psychotherapy, on the other hand, addresses “post-neurotic issues, existential issues of purpose and meaning (Boorstein, 1997, p. 8).”

Traditional psychotherapy strives to bring the individual to the highest level of psychological development possible. Spiritual understanding can be seen as the natural completion of personal psychological growth and development, as the way in which an individual comes to relate most fully to all of life experience.

(Boorstein, 1997, p. 8)

Boorstein agrees with Cortright that it is the orientation and scope of transpersonal psychology that differs from more traditional forms of psychotherapy, not so much in technique or method (Boorstein, 1996). While the use of meditation, awareness training or other techniques may be unique to the transpersonal approach, the major characteristic of transpersonal psychology lies in the perspective and attitude of the therapist. The transpersonal therapist should be personally connected and committed to some form of

spiritual life and is open to the spiritual and religious dimensions of her or his clients however these insights or practices may manifest. Additionally, there is created between patient and therapist an “intersubjective field” where there exists a subjective psychic interplay(Boorstein, 1997). It is here, in the intersubjective field, that the therapist connects with the interpsychic experience and suffering of the client and, with compassion and insight, is able to work with the client toward inner healing and an expanded sense of psychological and spiritual well-being.

Boorstein describes the goal of psychodynamic psychotherapy as bringing unconscious psychic material into consciousness so that, through a gradual process of increasing awareness, the individual can integrate this material into the whole personality (Boorstein, 1996). When this occurs, the individual can then be free from the effects of unconscious material on thoughts, feelings and behaviors. The goal of spiritual practices, generally speaking, is to take the individual beyond the confines of the limited ego self, so that he or she can experience an expanded sense of connectedness to a universal purpose or presence. Such spiritual experiences often lead to a highly positive therapeutic result.

Spiritual approaches have specific psychotherapeutic value when seen as being used to resolve our fear systems; they help us cultivate compassion, forgiveness, and acceptance and help us learn to temper our anger (Boorstein, 1997, p. 25).

When working with clients, Boorstein uses traditional theories and methods of psychotherapy, especially self-psychology, but incorporates them into an expanded

transpersonal framework. In contrast with Welwood's view, this would typically include some form of meditation or other techniques with a spiritual dimension. However, when a client has no inclination toward a spiritual perspective, Boorstein works strictly from a traditional point of view (Welwood, 1983).

Boorstein, (1997) in ways similar to other transpersonal therapists presented in this section, has a strong belief in the spiritual potential of the human psyche, and looks toward this dimension as an invaluable resource in the promotion of personal well-being.

Bhakti: Spirit versus Soul Paths

Cortright (1997) offers a useful way of classifying the numerous and often confusing spiritual/religious practices that transpersonal psychotherapists articulate as contributing to psychological well-being, practices he calls 'psycho-spiritual' (p. 127). In general, psycho-spiritual practices can be categorized as belonging either to the spirit path or to the soul path, or a combination of the two. Spirit paths employ mindfulness techniques, or those meditative practices that attend to the content of awareness itself without judging or becoming attached to the content of that awareness. These mindfulness techniques are most often found in nondual religious traditions such as Buddhism and some dimensions of Hinduism. Nondual traditions believe that the highest reality is impersonal and lies beyond the dual nature of creation. Buddhism believes that individuals have no soul, and that nirvana, the goal of arduous spiritual practice and innumerable incarnations, is essentially perfect emptiness, complete nothingness. A preponderance of the most influential transpersonal writers seem to belong to the spirit path (Kornfield, 1993; Vaughan, 1995; Walsh, 1983; Welwood, 1996; Wilber, 1997).

Spirit path practices are meant to contribute to psychological well-being so that the individual has “a greater feeling of being centered into one’s depths, a sense of generally being more peaceful and less agitated, and most centrally, a fuller awakening to the here and now” (Cortright, 1997, p. 129).

The meditation -- here Cortright speaks of meditation in broad terms -- practices employed by soul paths are devotional in nature, and include bhakti (devotion or love), surrender and prayer. Soul paths tend to be theistic, where the highest reality is seen as both a personal and an impersonal Divine Being or God.

The goal is to connect more deeply to the inner soul and to the Divine. An inward focus on prayer, call, surrender, aspiration, faith, opening to the Divine, devotion, bhakti, love - these are the godward movements that bring the seeker into deeper connection with the inner soul and which call on the Divine to manifest in a communion with the soul. (Cortright, 1997, p. 135)

Soul paths can primarily be characterized as bhakti in orientation. They are focused on increasing one’s relationship with the divine, through practices that increase devotion and love (1997).

Generally, the soul path contributes to psychological well-being in three ways (Cortright,1997): (a) the feeling of connectedness with the Divine, ie., that which is greater and more powerful, and which becomes a source of strength in facing life’s difficulties; (b) opening to the Divine puts the individual in touch with an inner source of love and compassion, which in turn becomes enormously helpful in personal growth and development; and (c) opening to the Divine helps create an inner sense of joy and

happiness, having the psychotherapeutic effect of reducing fear and anxiety, two of the most prevalent symptoms in the treatment of mental health (Cortright, 1997).

Scanning transpersonal literature over the past thirty years reveals the relative absence of the soul path perspective compared to the predominance of the spirit path approach. In The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology only one article specifically focusing on love (Welwood, 1985) can be found since its inception in 1969.

Given Wilber's influence on the field of transpersonal psychology, a probe into his writings helps provide perspective on the manner in which this spirit path has permeated the field. It is clear from various descriptions that Wilber is a meditator who, like so many transpersonal writers, takes a particularly Buddhist and spirit path slant on the spiritual life (Wilber, 1997). Wilber considers the highest consciousness achievable to be the Mind level, or what he elsewhere describes as the nondual level. Moreover, what appear to be Wilber's own particular experiences in his spiritual life seem to correspond with his descriptions of the nondual realm, or at least his experiences match what he believes the nondual level to be.

In that pure empty awareness, I-I am the rise and fall of all worlds, ceaselessly, endlessly. I-I swallow the Kosmos and span the centuries, untouched by time or turmoil, embracing each with primordial purity, fierce compassion. It has never started, this nightmare of evolution, and therefore it will never end.

It is as it is, self-liberated at the moment of its very arising. And it is only this.

The All is I-I. I-I is emptiness. Emptiness is freely manifesting is self-

liberating. (Wilber, 1996, p. 310.)

Elsewhere Wilber states: “And this simple recognition of an already present Spirit is the task, as it were, of the great Nondual traditions” (Wilber, 1997, p. 283). And, “that simple witnessing awareness, the traditions maintain, is Spirit itself, is the enlightened mind itself, is Buddha-nature itself, is God itself, in its entirety. Thus, according to the traditions, getting in touch with Spirit or God or the enlightened mind is not something difficult to achieve. It is your own simple witnessing awareness in exactly this moment. If you see this book, you already have that awareness - all of it - right now” (p. 287).

And one comes to this awareness through nondual meditation or contemplation (p. 284). Following is an example of simple witnessing, one that is written to lead the reader to believe it is a personal experience of the author (Wilber):

This realization may take many forms. A simple one is something like this: You might be looking at a mountain, and you have relaxed into the effortlessness of your own present awareness, and then suddenly the mountain is all, you are nothing. Your separate-self sense is suddenly and totally gone, and there is simply everything that is arising moment to moment. You are perfectly aware, perfectly conscious, everything seems completely normal, except you are nowhere to be found. You are not on this side of your face looking at the mountain out there; you simply are the mountain, you are the sky, you are the clouds, you are everything that is arising moment to moment, very simply, very clearly, just so.

We know all the fancy names for this state, from unity consciousness to sahaj samadhi. But it really is the simplest and most obvious state you will ever

realize. Moreover, once you glimpse that state - what the Buddhists call One Taste (because you and the entire universe are one taste or one experience) - it becomes obvious that you are not entering this state, but rather, it is a state that, in some profound and mysterious way, has been your primordial condition from time immemorial. You have, in fact, never left this state for a second. (Wilber, 1996, pp. 284-285)

Karma: The Path of Service

Readers would be hard put to find much written about the path of service or karma in the work of the preeminent transpersonalists described above. While Walsh and Vaughan devote an entire section to service in their book, Paths Beyond Ego, service, as they represent it, is more a natural consequence of the individual's inner transpersonal experiences, and not a separate path or way of devotion in and of itself (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993). Welwood (1983) also makes references to the importance of service but does not seem to develop an understanding of service as a distinct spiritual path.

However, notable transpersonal writers have addressed the path of karma. Ram Dass (Ram Dass & Gorman, 1985), a Western psychologist and well-known spiritual writer, sees that the work of all spiritual paths is for people to awaken from the experience of themselves as separate from the divine.

“Awakening from our sense of separateness is what we are called to do in all things, not merely in service. Whether these traditions speak of us as being cut off from God, Nature, Original Mind, True Being, the Tao, the Dharma - they call on us, in one voice, to undertake the journey back to unity” (Ram Dass & Gorman,

1985, p. 224).

Service can take any form imaginable, from the smallest deed that goes unnoticed to the greatest sacrifice (Ram Dass, 1993). Ram Dass describes the path of service as a journey that calls for an ever-increasing sense of self-awareness of our highest inner nature.

The path of service includes practices of quieting the mind, and loosening self identification with our personal and perhaps selfish motives for service. And finally, service is seen as an act of devotion:

This is the essence of the spiritual path of devotional service. One enters into the helping act not only because there is a need to be met. Service gradually becomes an offering, first to those we are with, but eventually to that greater truth or source of being in which we are all joined in love. Helping becomes an act of reverence, worship, gratitude. It is grace merely to have the chance to serve (Ram Dass & Gorman, 1985, p. 226)

It is interesting to note that Ram Dass (Ram Dass & Gorman, 1985) follows the late Neem Karoli Baba, a Hindu master, as the path of karma is an integral part of Hindu practice.

Jack Kornfield, a Western psychotherapist and a Buddhist, also writes about the importance of service as a spiritual path. The same qualities of attention and mindfulness that one would find in meditative practices, are cultivated in the path of service as well. Instead of an inward focus, the focus is now outward to the world. Such a life of service can open the individual to a greater sense of unity with all life, in which “the spirit of service asks us to touch and act from a deeper place, a chord of the heart that responds to

life out of connectedness and compassion, independently of results” (Kornfield, 1993, p. 280). From a Buddhist perspective, service can be a way of liberation:

For many people service and open-hearted giving become the very vehicle for their liberation and are taken as their path or way of practice. A sense of interconnectedness leads to the realization that all our activity can be undertaken as service to the world around us. Following this path brings us face to face with selflessness and nonseparation as surely as our inner meditation does. At its best, service becomes an act of selfless giving, of acting from the heart without attachment to praise or fame or even the beneficial result of the action. To act in this way embraces both compassion in our hearts and wisdom that sees that in the end we cannot own or possess a single thing. Our service is more a spirit of acting to the best of our ability with our full being and understanding. (Kornfield, 1993, pp. 279-280)

Other transpersonal writers have also written about the importance of service, including service as a way of meeting the critical ecological challenges that face the earth (Devall & Sessions, 1993; Fox, 1993; Russell, 1993) and to meet the other numerous crises engaging people around the globe (Elgin, 1993; Grof & Grof, 1993; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993). While these authors clearly articulate the need for service and its link to the transpersonal, spiritual dimensions of life, none even begin to approach developing the idea of service as a full blown spiritual path.

Meher Baba: The Path of Bhakti and Karma

Introduction

As discussed above, there is a relative absence of the paths of love and service, bhakti and karma, from the ever-growing transpersonal literature. Numerous transpersonal writers appear to have a spirit path or Buddhist point of view. While this perspective is needed and should be represented, it is, however, only one point of view. For a more complete picture of what can be truly called ‘transpersonal,’ a broader panorama is required. Following is a discussion of the ancient paths of bhakti and karma from the point of view of a modern practitioner of these paths, the twentieth century spiritual personality Meher Baba. An appropriate place to begin is to articulate how Meher Baba describes the purpose of creation.

The Purpose of Creation

The purpose of creation, as stated by Meher Baba, is for each soul to make the journey from being unconscious of itself as one with God (or the “Oversoul”) to becoming fully conscious of itself as being one with God.

The sole purpose of creation is for the soul to enjoy the infinite state of the Oversoul consciously. Although the soul eternally exists in and with the Oversoul in an inviolable unity, it cannot be conscious of this unity independently of creation, which is within the limitations of time. It must therefore evolve consciousness before it can realize its true status and nature as being identical with the infinite Oversoul, which is one without a second. (Meher Baba, 1967, p. 223)

On one level, God is always in unity with all of creation; on another, a conscious transformation of consciousness needs to take place to fulfill the natural movement in what can only be called spiritual evolution.

Meher Baba explains that all of creation came into being as a result of the “First Urge” or the “Whim” (Meher Baba, 1955, pp. 9-10). This is Meher Baba’s creation myth. The purpose behind the Urge was for God, who was unconscious of Himself, to become conscious of His infinite nature as love, or as infinite knowledge, power and bliss. The Whim is the ‘Who am I’ question of God. The resulting God-consciousness is the “I am God” answer (Meher Baba, 1963). While the “Beginningless Beginning” is the date-in-time when the Urge is said to have first occurred, it continues to be an infinite occurrence, something that is continuously taking place. The soul undergoes three different processes in the journey from God-unconscious to God-conscious: **1)** the evolution process, **2)** the reincarnation process, and, **3)** the realization process (Meher Baba, 1955).

The evolution process

Meher Baba uses the metaphor of a **drop in the ocean** to explain how separate existence or the ‘world of duality’ came into being out of infinite unity. While each drop represents an individual soul among the seemingly infinite number of souls in creation, in actuality there is only ocean, only One Soul. “When this urge makes the still water move, there immediately spring up numerous bubbles or forms around the drop; and it is these bubbles which give individuality to the drops. The bubbles do not and cannot actually divide the indivisible ocean; they cannot separate the drop from the ocean; they merely give to these drops a feeling of separateness or limited individuality (Meher Baba, 1962, p. 202).” In experiencing itself as separate from the ocean, the drop-soul begins a long and purposeful journey to answer the question “Who am I?” On this journey the drop-

soul experiences itself as innumerable forms during the evolution process. Progressing through an irreversible series of steps, the soul identifies itself through many incarnations with a multiplicity of finite forms within each step of the series. The irreversible series follows this course: gaseous forms, stone forms, metal forms, vegetable forms, worm/insect/reptile forms, fish forms, bird forms and finally, animal forms. During this evolutionary process, the drop-soul gathers what Meher Baba calls sanskaras or impressions (Meher Baba, 1967). “These impressions are deposits of previous experiences and become the important factors in determining the course of present and future experience (p. 32).”

As the drop-soul incarnates from one form to the next, the old bubble bursts and a new bubble develops with the taking on of each new form. “The consciousness of the drop-soul has now slightly increased; but, the drop soul is still conscious only of this new bubble or form and not of itself nor of the ocean” (Meher Baba, 1955, p. 203). The gathering of impressions or the “winding of sanskaras” takes place during the evolution process, and the accumulation of these sanskaras constitute an individual’s ‘karma.’” When considering an individual person’s karma, “the actions of past lives determine the conditions and circumstances of the present life, and the actions of the present life have their share in determining the conditions and circumstances of future lives” (Meher Baba, 1967, p. 327).

The reincarnation process

Meher Baba’s second phase in the journey of the drop-soul is the reincarnation process where, as a human being, the drop-soul reincarnates millions of times (Meher

Baba stated that the number of human incarnations is 8.4 million) as determined by the dictates of its accumulated sanskaras or karma from numerous pre-human forms. As a human being, the drop-soul is for the first time conscious of itself in creation. In addition, the internal functions of consciousness are regulated in the individual by what Meher Baba calls the false ego or the false self. The drop-soul incarnates into male and female forms, experiences itself as many different nationalities, many social levels, as intelligent or dim-witted, in short, as every imaginable variation of human being. During the reincarnation stage the unwinding of sanskaras takes place. That is, the sanskaras accumulated during the evolutionary period become looser, enabling the drop-soul to more easily discard them in its journey toward unity with the infinite. All the while, during this journey of consciousness, the drop-soul is unconsciously asking itself “Who am I,” and receiving with each incarnation an unsatisfying answer defined by separateness (I am this person, I am that person, etc.). Thus, the Whim pushes the soul ever onward to a point where it begins to long for the real answer of “I am God.”

The realization process: the higher domains of consciousness

This brings us to the final process in the drop-soul’s journey - the realization process. By now, the weary soul, as a human being, begins to turn inwardly to find an answer to the nagging question of existence. During the realization process, the soul passes through six stages or “planes of consciousness” to reach the seventh and final plane where the soul experiences union with God or God-realization. On the planes of consciousness, the soul ‘involves’ or moves gradually closer to God-consciousness.

The attainment of the seventh plane is the goal of the drop-soul’s journey from

God-unconscious to God-conscious, where the soul finally realizes “I am God.” On the seventh plane, the world of duality or illusion vanishes in the drop-soul’s permanent experience of union with the Ocean. “Here on the seventh plane the Self-conscious human atma is conscious of himself as God and experiences infinite power, infinite knowledge and infinite bliss (p. 50).” However, this final step is only possible by the “grace of a Perfect Master,” as Meher Baba describes one who is perfect or who has already reached the goal of God-realization. Through the help of a perfect master, the drop-soul is able to make the final leap into infinite consciousness. The soul, then, becomes that which it already is and has been all along. It knows everything infinitely - past, present and future, it has the power to do everything - which it eternally sees itself doing, and it experiences itself as dwelling in infinite bliss (p. 50).

The infinite-Knowing is ‘seeing’ everything at one and the same time, and seeing it NOW. It is that knowledge that does not begin and does not end, which is indivisible and continuous, and to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be subtracted. (Meher Baba, 1963, p. 38)

This state of infinite knowledge (omniscience) includes knowing all things infinitely - all thoughts and actions of every creature and person in detail, past, present and future, all at the same time! This is God-consciousness - infinite consciousness (1963).

The Journey

Meher Baba has stated that there are as many paths to God as souls. At the same time, he tends to describe general approaches in traditional terms of knowledge (jnana yoga), love (bhakti yoga) and work (karma yoga) (Meher Baba, 1967). The path which he

recommends to his followers is a combination of both bhakti and karma yoga. Meher Baba also stated that the aspirant can travel the path (through the planes of consciousness) to God either consciously or blindfolded, without having a conscious experience of the planes. However, this is only possible through the grace of the Master.

In fact, there is danger of the aspirant being detained on each one of the inner planes, because each in its own way is very alluring and serves as a trap for the aspirant. The Master either takes the aspirant past these planes or through them without unnecessary delay. (Meher Baba, 1967, p. 154)

Central to Meher Baba's description of the journey of the soul is the role of the master (Meher Baba, 1967).

The Role of the Master

Examples of spiritual masters, or "incarnations of God in a human being" (Huxley, 1945, p. 21), Huxley pointed out, can be found throughout history and in every higher religious tradition. In Meher Baba's path of love and work, there is no substitute for the master-disciple relationship. When he refers to a master, he is referring to an individual who has completed the journey of consciousness and has become one with God. Because the aspirant is unconscious of his higher, though intrinsic, state of God-consciousness, a realized master is essential for real progress in the journey to take place.

Those who are unconscious of their divinity can have no idea of the God state; they are only conscious of the body state. In order for them to inherit the God state, they have to love, worship, and be guided by the Master, who is constantly dwelling in the God state. (Meher Baba, 1967, p. 147)

And, the relationship between the master and the disciple is one of love: “It is primarily a relationship between the lover and his divine Beloved. From the spiritual point of view it is the most important relationship into which a person can enter.” (p. 147)

The Master is the divine Beloved; and when the disciple meets his Master, all that he has to do is to love him. For if the disciple loves the Master out of the fullness of his heart, his final union with him is assured. He need not worry about the quality of his love. He should love in spite of his weaknesses and not tarry till he can purify his own heart. The Master is the very source of purity, and to set one’s heart on the Master is the beginning of self-purification (p. 148).

The master becomes the source of love for the disciple, and serves as an object of both worship and faith. This love relationship with the master is, therefore, the cornerstone of the path of bhakti. For without the master there would be no lasting purpose to prayer, remembrance of God, music or other forms of devotion. According to Haynes (1989) “the lover, absorbed in the beauty and wonder of the Beloved, gives no thought to the various stages of the spiritual path.” (p. 86) Additionally, it is out of a sense of love for the master that the disciple serves the master in the world, which is the natural link to karma yoga. About work or service for the master or God, Meher Baba said: When the disciple’s service is spontaneous, wholehearted, selfless, and unconditional, it brings him more spiritual benefit that can ever come by any other means. Serving the Master is a joy for the disciple, even when it means an ordeal that tries his body or mind. Service offered under conditions of discomfort or inconvenience is a test of the disciple’s devotion. (Meher Baba, 1967, p. 150)

It is often the case, especially in the West where these relationships are uncommon, that the master-disciple relationship is seen as a subjugation of the individual's sense of self to another human being. It is sometimes seen as a personal weakness, a kind of brainwashing in which the individual has lost his will, and has, at worst, become a kind of mindless puppet, or, at best, been duped by some charismatic figure (1967). According to Wilber (1996), while these kinds of harmful relationships can and do occur in the cases of unscrupulous or ignorant pretenders to spiritual status on the one hand, and unwary seekers on the other, at the same time, these do not overshadow nor invalidate the very genuine and enormously beneficial tradition of master-disciple relationships that have been lived and documented for thousands of years.

In the highest sense, allegiance to a perfect master is really allegiance to the seeker's own, though unrealized, higher Self. In Meher Baba's words:

A disciple should be aware from the very beginning that the Master only requires the disciple to realize his own higher Self. In fact, the Master symbolizes this higher Self of the disciple and is none other than this higher Self, which is the same one Reality in all. (Meher Baba, 1967, pp. 150-151)

Thus, allegiance to the Master is only another form of allegiance to one's higher Self.

About his own spiritual status Meher Baba said:

All religions of the world proclaim that there is but one God, the Father of all in creation. I am that Father (Purdum, 1964, p. 363).

And,

Believe that I am the Ancient One. Do not doubt that for a moment. There

is no possibility of my being anyone else. I am not this body that you see. It is only a coat I put on when I visit you. I am infinite consciousness. (Meher Baba, 1963, p. 37)

Meher Baba described himself as one with God, as God conscious. Additionally, he called himself the 'Ancient One' or the 'Avatar' (Meher Baba, 1967). The Avatar, he says, is the same soul who comes throughout human history as God in human form to help uplift humanity toward its spiritual destiny.

The Avatar was the first individual soul to emerge from the evolutionary and involutionary process as a Sadguru, and He is the only Avatar who has ever manifested or will ever manifest. Through Him God first completed the journey from unconscious divinity to conscious divinity, first unconsciously became man in order to consciously become God. Through Him, periodically, God consciously becomes man for the liberation of mankind

The Avatar appears in different forms, under different names, at different times, in different parts of the world. As His appearance always coincides with the spiritual regeneration of man, the period immediately preceding His manifestation is always one in which humanity suffers from the pangs of the approaching rebirth. Man seems more than ever enslaved by desire, more than ever driven by greed, held by fear, swept by anger.

At this moment the Avatar appears. Being the total manifestation of God in human form, He is like a gauge against which man can measure what he is and what he may become. He tries the standard of human values by interpreting them

in terms of divinely human life (Meher Baba, 1967, pp. 268-269).

By following the Avatar (or any God-realized being), the seeker is able to benefit by his advanced consciousness. Through the Avatar's direct and guiding force, the drop-soul is gradually liberated from the bindings of accumulated sanskaras or karma (Meher Baba, 1967, pp. 268-269).

In those who contact Him, He awakens a love that consumes all selfish desires in the flame of the one desire to serve Him. Those who consecrate their lives to Him gradually become identified with Him in consciousness. Little by little their humanity is absorbed into His divinity, and they become free. (pp. 268-269)

And:

I was Rama, I was Krishna, I was this One, I was that One, and now I am Meher Baba. In this form of flesh and blood I am that same Ancient One who alone is eternally worshiped and ignored, ever remembered and forgotten. (Meher Baba, 1963, p. 48)

Transformation of consciousness

Whether traversing the planes of consciousness consciously or blindfolded, the seeker struggles to throw off the illusory experience of separate existence that prohibits union with the one indivisible Ocean of being. At the heart of this separate existence is the ego or false self, and as such, the elimination or transformation of the false self into the 'higher Self' or 'true Self' constitutes the spiritual quest. At the same time, the ego serves an important, though impermanent, function. "The formation of the ego serves the

purpose of giving a certain amount of stability to conscious processes and also secures a working equilibrium, which makes for a planned and organized life” (Meher Baba, 1967, p. 161). Though the ego provides an important organizing function, the nature of the ego is to identify with what is false in life, to take what is least important and think it most important, all the while ignoring the most important, spiritual dimensions of life:

“...although power, fame, wealth, ability, and other worldly attainments and accomplishments are really unimportant, the ego takes delight in these possessions and clings to them as ‘mine’” (p. 162). However, as the seeker comes under the protection and guidance of the master a gradual shift in consciousness begins to take place. Through increased efforts of love for the Master, surrenderance to the will of the Master, and in work dedicated to the Master, the ego changes:

As the ego gradually adjusts itself to the spiritual requirements of life - through the cultivation of humility, selflessness and love, wholehearted surrender and offering oneself to the Master, as Truth - it suffers a drastic curtailment. It not only offers less and less resistance to spiritual unfoldment but also undergoes a radical transformation. This eventually turns out to be so great that in the end the ego, as an affirmation of separateness, completely disappears and is substituted by the Truth, which knows no separateness. (p. 178)

The transformation of consciousness from the lower self to the higher Self takes place in and through the Master. Whereas before, the ego served as a way of organizing, focusing and making sense of the world, this center of integration is now shifted to the Master.

There arises, then, an imperative need for a new center of integration that will steer clear of the basic ignorance of separateness and will allow free scope for the incorporation of all values formerly inaccessible to the ego-center. Such a new center is provided by the Master, who expresses all that has real value and who represents the absolute Truth. The shifting of interest from unimportant things to important values is facilitated by allegiance and self-surrender to the Master, who becomes the new nucleus for integration. (p. 177)

The Paths of Love (bhakti) and Service (karma)

Both bhakti and karma paths are general sets of spiritual practices found within classical Hindu literature (Radhakrishnan, 1948). These paths include ‘jnana yoga,’ or the path of knowledge, an intellectual pathway to perfection, ‘bhakti yoga’ or the path of devotion and love, and ‘karma yoga’, or the way of work and action with the intention of service to God (Radhakrishnan, 1948). From an Eastern perspective, one that Meher Baba shares, each of these paths is a distinct way to God, each with their own methods. An individual will quite probably combine differing aspects of each of these, while emphasizing one or two. As mentioned earlier, the path that Meher Baba ascribes to his followers is a combination of both bhakti and karma yoga practices.

Interestingly, in the afterward to Wilber’s *Eye To Eye*, Vaughan recommends his work to those inclined to jnana yoga, referring to Wilber as an intellectual genius, and also speaks of his dedication to service in doing his work (Wilber, 1983). Based upon the breadth and depth of Wilber’s work, it appears that his path is indeed a combination of both jnana and karma yoga (with an emphasis on jnana), including an intense reliance on

meditation practice.

The Path of Love

Love holds a central place in Meher Baba's theology of the transformation of the ego to the higher Self (Meher Baba, 1967). When the ego is completely absorbed in love for the Beloved, it no longer gathers up new sanskaras, but instead is actually undoing the attachments of old sanskaras. The person who practices bhakti is an ardent devotee of God, one who expresses her devotion through various acts of prayer, remembrance of God, music or any form that expresses love for God. The path of bhakti is the path of love for the Beloved, in whatever form the Beloved may take. About bhakti, Meher Baba says:

When love is deep and intense, it is called bhakti, or devotion. In its initial stages devotion is expressed through symbol worship, supplication before the deities, reverence and allegiance to the revealed scriptures, or the pursuit of the Highest through abstract thinking. In its more advanced stages devotion expresses itself as interest in human welfare and the service of humanity, love and reverence for saints, and allegiance and obedience to a spiritual Master. These stages have their relative values and relative results. Love for a living Perfect master is a unique stage of devotion, for it eventually gets transformed into para-bhakti or divine love. (Meher Baba, 1967, p. 55-56)

The path of bhakti can be found in spiritual and religious traditions throughout the world. Many aspects of Christianity are focused on devotion and can be considered a soul path in Cortright's terms. Intense expressions of love and devotion can be found in

the works of Teresa of Avila (Teresa of Avila, 1961), Francis of Assisi (Fortini, 1981), and Hildegard of Bingen (Fox, 1987), to name a few outstanding examples. Numerous examples of the path of bhakti can be found in Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam. These would include: the well known poets Rumi (Chittick, 1983) and Hafiz (Arberry, 1947) and the woman saint Rabia (Upton, 1988). Hinduism as well has a long tradition of devotion to God, as seen through the writings of the classic Hindu text the Bhagavad Gita (Radhakrishnan, 1948), the woman saint and poet Mirabai (Alston, 1980), and the northern Indian poet Tukaram (Hoyland, 1932).

When addressing the most practical and attitudinal ways to love God, Meher Baba offered these guidelines:

If we understand and feel that the greatest act of devotion and worship to God is not to hurt or harm any of His beings, we are loving God.

To love God in the most practical way is to love our fellow beings. If we feel for others in the same way as we feel for our own dear ones, we love God.

If, instead of seeing faults in others, we look within ourselves, we are loving God.

If, instead of robbing others to help ourselves, we rob ourselves to help others, we are loving God.

If we suffer in the sufferings of others and feel happy in the happiness of others, we are loving God.

If, instead of worrying over our own misfortunes, we think of ourselves as

more fortunate than many many others, we are loving God.

If we endure our lot with patience and contentment, accepting it as His will, we are loving God. (Meher Baba, 1976, p. 109)

As can be seen in the above guidelines, the work of the practitioner of bhakti is not only to focus on certain devotional practices (prayers, poetry, remembrance, music, etc.), but also to focus on an internal attitude of surrenderance to the will of God, as well as an adjustment of outward actions (Meher Baba, 1967). The goal is for a transformation of consciousness to take place, for the true self to gradually replace the false self through love. As the lover is required to adjust outer actions, the path of bhakti fits naturally with the path of service.

The Path of Service

Karma yoga is concerned with a spiritual life devoted to action and service. “Not by seeking individual happiness or safety,” says Meher Baba,

“but by again and again offering one’s life in the service of others is it possible to rise to the unsurpassed completeness of realized truth. God is not to be sought by running away from life but by establishing unity with the one in the many” (Meher Baba, 1962, p.12).

Service can take any form of action, but it is the intention behind the action that is most important. If the action is undertaken without thought of selfish desire, or without obligation to those who are served, and if it is done in dedication to the master or to God, then it can be called true selfless service, service worthy of the karma yogi (practitioner).

A life of selfless service, according to Meher Baba:

..may normally consist of a life of service to humanity, a life in which effort is expended to improve the well-being of people through social, political or physical projects....Such service is not a mechanical response to a sense of duty, but a spontaneous expression of voluntary love. Through it man gradually becomes purer, is freed from many limitations, and finds peace of being as he becomes wholly detached from the results of his action. (Stevens, 1971, p. 159)

The path of karma yoga can also be located in the world's religious and spiritual traditions. Examples can be found in the writing of the 20th century Catholic monastic Thomas Merton (1990), the great social reformer Martin Luther King, Jr. (King, 1991), as well as through the writing of Teresa of Avila and numerous other Christian mystically and socially-oriented writers. The Hindu tradition speaks of the practice of karma yoga again through the classic Bhagavad Gita, as well as in more modern examples, such as the well-known mystic Sri Ramakrishna (Sri Ramakrishna, 1932), and the great politician and social reformer Mahatma Gandhi.

Through acts of service dedicated to God, the higher self is able to subjugate the selfish demands of the lower self, facilitating a gradual shifting of conscious. Service, as seen in the writings of Ram Dass, Kornfield, and Meher Baba can have a transformative effect on the individual and, at its best, can be a vehicle for realizing the inherent unity of life.

Transpersonal Psychological Research

As mentioned earlier, the contention of this paper is that very little has been written in transpersonal literature on the paths of bhakti and karma. The result of the

literature search done for this research is that I have not uncovered any qualitative or quantitative studies addressing these paths or their psychological ramifications.

However, while the field of transpersonal psychology is relatively young, some (though very little) research has been done in a few areas.

Probably more than any other topic, a great deal of research has been done on the effects of meditation (Boudreau, 1972; French, 1974; Kornfield, 1979; Nidich, 1973; Walsh, 1979, Walsh, 1983). Research has been done as well on altered states of consciousness (Grof, 1993; Metzner, 1994; Tart, 1971; Tart, 1976; Walsh, 1995). More recently, studies have been conducted looking at near-death experiences (Carr, 1993; Wren-Lewis, 1995). Several studies have been conducted that reviewed assessment instruments designed to measure transpersonal experiences and constructs (MacDonald, 1994; MacDonald, 1995). And, one study investigated how transpersonal psychotherapists differed from other practitioners (Hutton, 1994).

Implications for Counselor Education

The Developing Self

It has been argued from a cognitive-developmental point of view that the more developed or evolved a counselor has become as a person, according to various cognitive-developmental theories, the more helpful they will be in aiding clients with developmentally more complex problems (Foster & McAdams, 1998). As outlined below, leading cognitive developmental theorists tend to present human development using a stage approach. A brief description of these theories is presented to demonstrate that people who have reached higher stages have become more developed as people.

These stages “represent transformations of simpler cognitive structures into more differentiated, integrated and complex structures” (Gielen, 1994, p. 22). This has strong implications for counselor education. As Foster and McAdams (1998) point out: “A significant body of research indicates that higher levels of cognitive development predict successful functioning in areas related to counseling and supervision, including greater empathic communication, more autonomy and interdependence, and more flexible counseling and teaching methods” (Foster & McAdams, 1998, p.5).

Erikson's (1963) theory of psychosocial development outlines a sequence of eight interconnected stages through which human development occurs. As the individual traverses each stage, she or he is faced with a "crisis" or a series of choices that can either move one forward or act to impede healthy growth. Erikson sees human growth as a result of facing “conflicts, inner and outer, which the vital individual weathers, re-emerging from each crisis with an increased sense of inner unity, with an increase of good judgment, and an increase in the capacity 'to do well' according to his own standards and to the standards of those who are significant to him” (Erikson, 1968, p. 92).

For instance, in the fifth stage, *identity versus identity confusion*, adolescents (ages 12-18 or so) are concerned with the primary task of "identity formation," or moving from a state of non-ego identity to one of ego identity. Ego identity, says Erikson, in its subjective aspect, is the awareness of the fact that there is a selfsameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods, the style of one's individuality, and that this style coincides with the sameness and

continuity of one's meaning for significant others in the immediate”
community. (p. 50)

According to Erikson, successful completion of this stage should result in a certain unity of personality, where the individual has been able to develop a sense of themselves as they interact with the world. Estrangement at this stage leads to what he calls "identity confusion." This is manifested in the individual by a general sense of bewilderment about who they are inwardly as well as an inability to connect in meaningful and lasting ways to the outside world (1968).

Piaget's stage theory of cognitive development (Santrock, 1995) identifies four stages: (a) sensorimotor, (b) preoperational, (c) concrete operational, and (d) formal operational. Each stage is age related, and each successive stage represents a qualitatively different mode of reasoning than the previous one. In the fourth and final stage, "individuals move beyond the world of actual, concrete experiences and think in abstract and more logical terms" (p. 42).

Building upon the work of Piaget, Kohlberg articulated six stages of moral reasoning (Gielen, 1994). Kohlberg is considered a cognitive-developmental constructivist, implying that people are constantly in a process of constructing or making meaning out of their personal experience (Hayes, 1992). Described by Kohlberg as more of a "soft stage model" (p.38), (as opposed to Piaget's model where the stages are seen as more rigid or inflexible in their boundaries), his schema is made up of three levels composed of six stages. **Level I**, or the Preconventional level - is made up of two stages: Stage 1 - Heterogamous Morality, and Stage 2 - Individualism, Instrumental Purpose, and

Exchange. **Level II**, or the Conventional level also has two stages: Stage 3 - Mutual Interpersonal Expectations, Relationships, and Interpersonal Conformity, and Stage 4 Social System and Conscience. Finally, **Level III** or the Postconventional level is additionally composed of two stages: Stage 5 - Social Contract or Utility and Individual rights, and Stage 6 - Universal Ethical Principles.

The post convention level is considered to be a higher dimension of moral understanding where the individual has moved beyond the domain of thinking in terms of moral rules to thinking in terms of abstract moral principles that rise above concretely conceptualized rules. In Kohlberg's stages, there is a movement away from what he called heteronomous to autonomous moral decision making. That is, a movement away from thinking about moral decisions in congruence with established rules, toward a more individual and autonomous process based upon universal principles.

Following Piaget, Kohlberg and his co-workers have proposed three hypotheses regarding the heteronomy-autonomy typology. The first hypothesis states that moral growth throughout the stages of moral reasoning should be accompanied by a gradual shift toward moral autonomy. ...The second hypothesis proposes that moral autonomy develops most consistently in institutions and societies emphasizing democracy, equality, cooperation, and mutual relationships. ...Finally, it has been hypothesized that moral autonomy leads to moral behavior, because moral autonomy is based upon an intrinsic respect for moral principles and a sense of inner obligation. ((Santrock, 1995, p. 34)

Jane Loevinger (1976) also postulated a stage theory (six levels with three transitional stages) in the development of the self which reveals a relationship between ego development and character (maturity of behavior).

In the higher stages (the discussion will focus only on the higher states for reasons of brevity), the individual, as a mature adult, has achieved a sense of personal autonomy as well as interdependence with others (5th or Autonomous stage). In addition, the individual develops a sense of personal integration (6th or Integrated stage), where interpersonal style is concerned with the individual, and character focuses on reconciling inner conflicts as well as giving up goals that are unattainable. Like all other stage models, to attain these higher levels, however, a person must pass through lower developmental stages (1976).

Robert Kegan (1996) presents what he called a 'neo-Piagetian' approach to the developing self. Evolutionary activity is the fundamental ground of personality, according to Kegan. The self evolves through a sequence of qualitative changes from infancy through adulthood, in response to what it perceives as the increasing complexity of the world. Basically, the self (as subject) is in a constant process of "meaning-making," not only out of the world (as object) it experiences, but also its own identity in relation to that world.

The highest (fifth) stage Kegan calls "interindividual." Here the self is no longer defined by adherence to the social, legal, or what Kegan called the institutional standards of the day. Now the individual, as an independent self, is able to step back from the institutional, to judge, confirm or perhaps create the values and principles upon which

institutions are based. “One’s self is no longer limited to the mediation and control of the interpersonal (the self as an institution) but expands to mediate one’s own and others’ ‘institutions’” (p. 104).

Building upon the constructive-developmental theories of Piaget, Kohlberg and Selman, Fowler (1987) has fashioned six stages of faith development. Fowler, a Christian (Protestant) theologian and instructor at a Methodist Seminary, undertook this work to find a way in “which practical theology can engage in the effort to account for how we become subjects before and in relation to God” (p. 53). He revised an earlier version of his stages (Fowler, 1981), with an updated view correlating stages of faith with stages of selfhood as presented in Kegan’s work (Fowler, 1987).

Briefly, the stages include: **Stage 0 - *Primary Faith and the Incorporated Self***, and which occurs during infancy; **Stage 1 – *Intuitive-Projective Faith and the Impulsive Self***, which is usually from ages 7 to 11; **Stage 2 – *Mythic-literal Faith and the Imperial Self***, which is characterized by the person’s attempts to find some order in their family and religious understanding (Worthington, 1989), (stages 2 and upward may all be inhabited by adults, meaning that some adults have not moved beyond stage 2); **Stage 3 – *Synthetic-Conventional Faith and the Interpersonal Self***, which is faith characterized by conforming to established beliefs and rules; **Stage 4 – *Individuative-Reflective Faith and the Institutional Self***, where the individual creates a rational world view and where religious symbols are demythologized; **Stage 5 – *Conjunctive-Faith and the Inter-Individual Self***, characterized by an integration of parts of the self that have been ignored or evaded, where the individual “begins to make peace with the tension arising from the

fact that truth must be approached from a number of different directions and angles of vision (Fowler, 1989, p. 72)", (Most people don't reach this stage); and, **Stage 6 – *Universalizing Faith and the God-Grounded Self***, where the self is transformed and "regrounded beyond itself in God" (p. 76).

It is clear from the foregoing stage theories of human development that within each area higher is better, i.e., is related to more adequate functioning. For instance, when applied to counselor education, the more highly developed counselors become in moral reasoning, the more they will be able conceptualize complex moral dilemmas facing themselves and their clients. This does not mean, however, that higher in one area, say ego development, translates to higher in another area, say moral judgement. Research (Foster & Sprinthall, 1992) suggests that cognitive development is domain specific, that is, "advanced cognitive development in one area, such as intellectual achievement, does not necessarily generalize to advanced development in other domains, such as career, personal, or interpersonal growth" (p. 658).

Promoting the development of individuals (including intellectual, emotional, ego, moral, career, interpersonal, etc.) is an important aspect of counseling, as pointed out by the American Counseling Association (Myers, 1992) and others (Sprinthall, 1994). Using a developmental framework, it appears possible to conclude that if a goal of counseling is to help people develop spiritually as well, then counselors themselves need to be developing spiritually. And, in turn, counseling education needs to promote such development in their educational processes. One large implication of encouraging the development of counselors on all levels, as Matthews (1998) suggests, is that:

Students [counseling students] who work hard to know themselves will have much more to draw from in empathizing with their clients. In contrast, students who have a limited, naïve or idealized view of self are potentially harmful to their clients; it almost assures they will project their unconscious deficits onto them (p. 4).

Spirituality and Counselor Education

Recent polls report that high percentages of Americans cite the importance of religious or spiritual dimensions in their lives (Hutton, 1994; Bart, 1998; Bullis, 1992; Kelly, 1994). In Newsweek, Kantrowitz “reports a poll of the U.S. population which shows 20% of Americans report having a revelation from God in the last year, 13% have sensed the presence of an angel, 58% feel the need to experience spiritual growth, and 33% have had a religious or mystical experience (Hutton, 1994, p.144).” A 1992 Gallup Poll revealed that 66% of people surveyed stated that they preferred seeing a counselor who had spiritual beliefs and values, and 81% stated that they would want their own values integrated into the counseling process (Bart, 1998).

Kelly’s study of counselor education programs indicate that the vast majority (93.9%) of counselor education programs do not offer a course dealing with religion/spirituality in counseling (Kelly, 1994). Asked if interns receive supervision on the impact of the client’s religious/spiritual values in the counseling process, 61.4% said either “not at all”, or “not much”. And finally, when asked if it is important for counselor education programs to prepare students to deal with spiritual/religious issues in counseling, 83.3% said ‘somewhat to very much’. Of 525 surveys mailed, 343

institutions responded representing more than 75% of all programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (1994).

While institutions of higher learning may see the importance of considering spiritual/religious parts of peoples lives, very few of these institutions have any formal training that addresses this crucial dimension from a psychological/developmental (or spiritual) point of view. Ivey and others (Van Hesteren & Ivey, 1990) see the primary task of counseling as not simply the remediation or prevention of problems, but, rather they view problems as opportunities for growth and development. Again, the American Counseling Association (ACA) has also articulated that the focus of counseling be on the concern for human development over the life span (Myers, 1992). Simultaneously, a case is being made for including spiritual dimensions as a developmental necessity in counselor education (Kelly, 1994; Matthews, 1999; Porter, 1995; Worthington, 1989).

Based on developmental research outlined above, a case could be made that the more developed a personal is spiritually (in whatever form), the more they will be able to draw upon that development to face life's ups and downs (Worthington, 1989). So too, the more developed a counselor is spiritually, the better able he or she will be to help a person who is struggling in ways that include spiritual or religious dimensions. If nothing else, as Pate (1992) points out, becoming aware of a person's religious/spiritual beliefs is an important aspect of multicultural awareness – a central concern of counselor education (Ponterotto, 1995). Additionally, as Grof and Grof (1987) have articulated, there are also psychological conditions, which they call spiritual emergence and emergency, which may

be, in and of themselves, specifically spiritual in origin. An understanding of the symptoms of these conditions would only enhance a therapist's ability to treat clients who may suffer in this way.

Conclusion

As stated at the outset, if the field of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy is to be truly inclusive in its theoretical orientation, a clear description of both the bhakti and karma yoga paths is needed. While there is growing agreement on the definition and scope of transpersonal psychology, there exist a wide variety of approaches to the practice of transpersonal psychotherapy. This is due in no small measure to the openness and inclusiveness accorded to the definitions of transpersonal experience and the transpersonal domain in general. At the same time, the most influential transpersonal literature seems to have a more spirit path or Buddhist orientation, which gives the field the appearance of being lopsided and incomplete.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the case study qualitative research methodology that was employed for studying the three selected transpersonal psychotherapists who follow the bhakti/karma path as articulated by the spiritual leader Meher Baba. The discussion first describes the nature of qualitative research and its particular application to this study. Next, the methodology section focuses on the setting of the study, participants, researcher's role, procedures, data collection, verification and data analysis - including thematic patterns articulated by the three participants and how these patterns compare to themes found in transpersonal literature. Ethical dimensions of the research are then considered, along with a discussion of the limitations of the study.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is described as an interpretive and naturalistic research method (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), as opposed to more positivistic quantitative research, which purports to be more objective and cause and effect oriented (Creswell, 1994). Unlike quantitative research, a qualitative approach is not undertaken to prove or disprove a hypotheses (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992). Rather, in qualitative research data is collected and analyzed inductively for the purpose of building understanding and theory. On the basis of this foundational process, additional studies, both qualitative and quantitative can be conducted to further understand the problem or area investigated.

Qualitative research is descriptive in nature and focuses on the intensive study of specific subject areas (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). That is, the data collected is in the form of words that describe how the participant understands the topic being investigated. The reason for this is that qualitative research is concerned with ways people make ‘meaning’ out of their lives, how they see things from their own unique point of view (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992). This method assumes that reality is subjective in nature, value laden and context bound (Creswell, 1994). “This means that qualitative researchers study things in their own natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2).

Constructivism, or the “belief that knowledge is made up largely of social interpretations rather than awareness of an eternal reality” (Stake, 1995, p. 170), is another way the subjective nature of qualitative research has come to be described.

As this study was concerned with the meanings selected transpersonal therapists placed upon their own spiritual and professional lives, qualitative research was a particularly suitable design. The primary methodological tool consisted of a case study approach, in this instance multiple case studies, using multiple semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interview process has been traditionally used to explore a few general topics in order to uncover the participants’ own meaning and perspective, while at the same time respecting how the participants frame and structure their responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Stake refers to in-depth interviews as “the main road to multiple realities”(Stake, 1995, p. 64).

The researcher is considered the main ‘instrument’ in qualitative studies, and as such, enters into the lives of the people being studied (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Eisner refers to this as the “self as an instrument”:

The self is the instrument that engages the situation and makes sense of it. This is done most often without the aid of an observation schedule; it is not a matter of checking behaviors, but rather of perceiving their presence and interpreting their significance (Eisner, 1991, p. 34).

Qualitative research rejects the assertion that interpretation is a liability to understanding (Eisner, 1991). On the contrary, qualitative methodology recognizes that human understanding is contextually bound, and that the researcher “speaks from a particular class, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 11).” However, the subjective quality of the researcher is viewed in a positive context, with the researcher’s background and assumptions being made explicit in the report. Moreover, it is the researcher’s role to recognize and substantiate the meanings that arise through the course of the study (Stake, 1995). Indeed, interpretation and the researcher’s role in the interpretive process are the strengths of qualitative inquiry. This does not mean to suggest that researchers are free to extrapolate in whatever whimsical manner they choose. Rather, sound evidence and reasoning must accompany the understandings and interpretations that arise from the research experience (Eisner, 1991).

Methodology: Multiple Case Studies

Setting

The in-depth interview process took place in the participants' own environment, i.e., in their home or office. Once the therapists were identified and invited to participate in the study, I traveled to their locations in order to conduct the interview sessions. As mentioned earlier, the purpose behind using qualitative methodology is to glean an understanding of some aspect or condition of an individual's life experience in their natural environment - in the field, so to speak.

Participants

Qualitative research tends to focus on a small number of people in an in-depth manner (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As such, sampling in qualitative design is purposeful, rather than random in nature; that is, the participants are chosen for a reason: those selected have a high potential to yield good data ((Marshall & Rossman, 1995). As the purpose of qualitative research is to maximize what can be learned from the sample chosen (Stake, 1995), sampling is meant to be purposeful, and the people chosen are considered exemplar cases.

The criteria for choice of participants was as follows: **a)** three individuals who identify themselves as transpersonal psychotherapists, and who also identify themselves as following the spiritual path outlined by the 20th century spiritual figure Meher Baba; **b)** each therapist had at least ten years of professional psychotherapeutic practice, which it was assumed would give them a broad experiential base from which to draw professional

insights; and, c) each participant had also been a devotee of Meher Baba for ten years, assuring that they are familiar with and practice some aspects of bhakti and karma yoga.

The participants are located in the United States, as travel to other parts of the world was financially prohibitive for the researcher. As such, other nationalities and ethnic groups were not sampled, especially those therapists in India, where most devotees of Meher Baba live. Additionally, participants included two Caucasian males and one Caucasian female, as most followers of Meher Baba in the United States are from a European-American extraction.

As I was familiar each of the participants, access was a relatively straightforward process. Each person was telephoned and informed about the nature and process of the research. All participants expressed that they felt pleased to be asked to be part of the study. The participants all volunteered for the study; that is, none was given any stipend for their involvement. They were also informed that their identities would be kept confidential, and that I would remove any references in the text that might point to who they are.

Researchers Role

As mentioned before, as the researcher, I am the main instrument in data collection and interpretation, and as such, had an important analytical and interpretive function both during and after the interview phases of this study. As the researcher, I entered into the lives of the individuals studied, becoming knowledgeable with the intimate details of their spiritual practices, as well as how they see the influence of their spiritual life on the way they function as a psychotherapist.

Procedures

The time line for the study was as follows:

June 1998: Study approved by the Human Subjects Committee of the College of William and Mary. Participants contacted and agreements signed. As stated above, I did not foresee any difficulty in securing informed consent form the selected participants after the initial contact in made.

September - December 1998: Collection of data.

January - April 1999: Data analyzed and dissertation written.

Data Collection Strategies

Data was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews, which were meant to give me an opportunity to step into the mind of the participants in ways alternate research techniques cannot provide (McCracken, 1988). The ‘professional interview’ has been described as a unique type of conversation about daily life (Kvale, 1996). It is “an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale, 1966, pp. 5-6).” The difference between a professional and a non-professional interview is the asymmetry of power in a professional interview, where the professional is in charge of the conversation (Kvale, 1996). This asymmetry lies in contradistinction to everyday conversation where the exchange is more or less equal between parties.

Again, the purpose of the qualitative research interview is to gain an understanding of the meanings the interviewee gives to their life experiences.

“Technically, the qualitative research interview is semistructured, and is neither an open conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire. It is conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes and that may include suggested questions (Kvale, 1996, p. 27).” I developed the research questions by first sifting through the transpersonal literature and deciding upon the broad kinds of information I wanted to know. After which, I constructed questions that I felt would elicit this information. The questions were then submitted to the dissertation committee for comments. After this, a final draft of the research questions was written.

Interview guides were used to help facilitate the interview sessions, keeping in mind the importance of balance between structure and openness during the conversations. That is, there was “an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subjects” (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). The guides helped determine the topics and their sequence in the interview, where the questions thematically related to the topic of the interview.

The questions asked during the interviews were connected to two broad themes. First, participants were asked to talk about the ways they experience the bhakti and karma spiritual path of Meher Baba in their personal life. Given the demonstrable absence of the bhakti and karma paths in transpersonal literature, one broad question I wanted to address is how individuals involved in this spiritual path have come to experience it in their lives. Second, interviewees were asked to talk about how the experiences in their spiritual life have come to influence their psychotherapeutic work with clients. The purpose of this question was to begin to discover how bhakti/karma practices influence

the therapist in their work with clients. This would include the influence on both their frame of mind as well as the therapeutic techniques they may choose. Vaughan (1979) along with other transpersonal therapists would refer to the influence of the therapist frame of mind as the 'context' of therapy.

I conducted the interviews, using a tape recorder, in a setting natural to each respondent, either in their home or work place. Also, over the course of the study, the participants were asked to check the contents of the interviews by reviewing written transcripts of the interviews. This process, called member checking, is used to enable participants to confirm and further illuminate their remarks (Stake, 1995).

Verification

Verification refers to the standards of quality the study follows throughout the research. Concern was paid to the accuracy of both the data collected as well as the interpretative summaries arrived at by the researcher. This focus on the credibility of the study is meant "to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described" (Marshall & Goodman, 1995, p.143). This means that the data and research summaries must be credible in the eyes of the participants who have been studied as well as in the eyes and minds of the readers.

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative studies are not concerned with generalizability, but more with understanding the specific case at hand (Stake, 1996). At the same time, findings from qualitative work have been described as "naturalistic generalizations", or the general understandings people receive through life experience.

These are differentiated from more scientific or propositional generalizations in that “naturalistic generalizations are arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to” themselves (Stake, 1996, p. 85). Such generalizations will be appropriately concluded from this study.

In addition, as mentioned above, this study fed the material back to participants - through member checking - in order to verify the information I collected.

Data Analysis

This study utilized the constant comparative method in analyzing the data (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). In addition, both within-case displays to draw out prominent themes, and cross-case displays to scrutinize the data for similarities and differences between participants were used (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As mentioned earlier, member checking was employed to verify the accuracy of the data from the interviewees point of view. Next, the data was synthesized into themes and categories of beliefs and behavior of the participants in order to generate a picture of the influence that bhakti/karma practices have had on interviewees personal and professional lives. The results of the analysis were put before two dissertation committee audits that looked at each stage to verify the connection to the data and transcripts.

The analysis outcomes were then matched to the pertinent and appropriate categories found in current transpersonal literature. Primarily, this comparison focused first on bhakti and karma practices as legitimate transpersonal experiences, and second on the influence of a bhakti and karma spiritual life on the frame of mind of the therapist.

The latter focus looked at how the frame of mind of the therapist provided both a context for therapy, as well as influences the choice of therapeutic techniques.

Ethical Considerations

The three main ethical considerations discussed in this section pertinent to the proposed research study are informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and consequences.

Informed consent involves “informing the research subjects about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design, as well as of any possible risks and benefits from participation in the research project” (Kvale, 1996, p. 112).

Informed consent also includes receiving written voluntary consent from the participant to be part of the project, with the understanding they can withdraw at any time. I secured informed consent from each interviewee prior to beginning the interview process. Included in that process was a clear articulation of the purpose and procedures of the research project.

Confidentiality and anonymity refers to keeping private information obtained during the interview process, and potentially recognizable by other people, from being reported (1996). Kvale concludes that: if a study involves publishing information potentially recognizable to others, the subjects need to agree to the release of identifiable information. In such cases this should be stated explicitly in a written agreement. The protection of subjects’ privacy by changing their names and identifying features is an important issue in the reporting of interviews” (Kvale, 1996, p. 114).

Participants were informed of the possibility of private information being

reported. Agreement was obtained for such reporting, however, their names and any other identifiable features in the reporting of information were also changed.

In addressing concern about the ‘consequences’ of a study, Kvale (1996) concludes that “the consequences of an interview study need to be addressed with respect to possible harm to the subjects as well as the expected benefits of participating in the study” (p. 116). In this study, it was possible that an interviewee may disclose information about their personal spiritual life, as well as their professional life they would not wish to be reported. I informed interviewees that should they strongly object to the inclusion of sensitive material after discussing the issue with me, I would not include the objectionable material in the report.

Chapter four will provide a descriptive picture of each of the three people interviewed. As the qualitative data used in this research consists of the interviewees’ own verbal expressions that describe how they understand the topic being investigated, this picture will be painted by the therapists themselves. Again, qualitative research is concerned with ways people make meaning’ out of their lives, how they see things from their own perspective. Chapter five presents an analysis of data gathered from the interviews, which focused primarily on how each therapist described the experiences of their spiritual life as well as their therapeutic practice.

CHAPTER FOUR

Case Descriptions

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a descriptive picture of each of the three people interviewed. As stated earlier, the data collected for qualitative research is in the form of words that describe how the participant understands the topic being investigated.

The reason for this is that qualitative research is concerned with ways people make meaning' out of their lives, how they see things from their own unique point of view (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992). This method assumes that reality is subjective in nature, is value laden and context bound (Creswell, 1994). This means that qualitative researchers study things in their own natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2).

I present each participant by first outlining their personal information, including age, gender, race, college background, prior religious orientation, years in practice, and years following Meher Baba. At the same time, in order to maintain the anonymity of the participants, I have removed any reference – geographical or personal - that might lead to their identification.

Next, I have then provided brief descriptions of the interviews with each participant, including the location, setting, and personal reflections concerning the participant and the interviews. The last two sections contain the substance of the chapter,

and include first, a description of the participant's spiritual life in their own words, and finally a description of the participant's therapeutic practice, again, in their own words. It should be noted that while the participant's statements appearing in this chapter represent approximately 40-50% of the overall contents of the transcripts, they are nonetheless intended to substantially represent what each articulated in the interviews.

As articulated in chapter two, the spiritual path Meher Baba recommends to his followers is a combination of both bhakti (love and devotion) and karma (service). The following descriptions will contain references to ways each participant approaches love and service in their lives. A primary consideration underneath the expressions of those interviewed is their relationship with Meher Baba as their spiritual master. The master is the source of love for the disciple, and serves as an object of both worship and faith. This love relationship with the master is, therefore, the cornerstone of the path of bhakti. The master provides the focus and purpose for prayer, remembrance of God, music or other forms of devotion. In addition, it is out of love for the master that the disciple undertakes service in the world.

Sam

Sam is a male Caucasian, forty-five years. He received his undergraduate degree in psychology from an American university and a M.S.W., also from an American university. He was brought up in the Christian church which he described as not very meaningful to him, and has been following Meher Baba for twenty-five years. Additionally, he has been practicing psychotherapy for twenty-two years, mostly in private practice.

I interviewed him one Saturday morning in September of 1998, at his home, about his spiritual life, and then the same afternoon at his office regarding his psychotherapeutic practice. My original plan was to have at least two weeks between interviews, however, this arrangement was more convenient for Sam, so we agreed to do it this way.

Sam's home is tucked back in the woods in a fairly remote area. It immediately felt both secluded and serene. I conducted the first interview on his back patio surrounded by the pleasant sights and sounds of the forest. As this was my first interview, I was a bit nervous about being able to get the information I needed - whether my questions were clear or Sam would really get into the subject. Within minutes my fears were put to rest, as Sam opened up in a very articulate and engaging manner. My impression was that he felt free to speak his mind and heart about the meaning of his spiritual life. I had known Sam only briefly, although he knew other members of my family fairly well. The interview flowed smoothly, and, I felt he got to the heart of what I was asking. I felt that the serenity of the setting closely matched the serenity of Sam's demeanor and articulation of what was a very important part of his life.

We had lunch at a local restaurant, and then went to his office for the second interview. Again, his office space was set back in a wooded area, which gave it a feeling of remoteness and peace, with huge leafy trees serving as a canopy or cathedral over the one story wooden office complex. The office was closed for the day so the interview was conducted with only one interruption. A therapist in an office nearby saw a snake slither into one of her rooms. Sam and I went to see if we could get the snake out, but could not find it anywhere. We conducted the interview outside on a small patio off of one of the

offices. The setting was unusually quiet, and the interview concerning his therapeutic practice felt very focused and fruitful to me.

One final note: In this chapter my comments will appear in italics.

Sam's Spiritual Life

Sam began sharing with me how he came to his spiritual life.

I never had an interest in spirituality. I joined the local church because my parents wanted me to. It didn't feel meaningful. Part of that is just adolescence, I am not sure people are ready for a connection with God at that early age.

Then I went away to college. I was living in the mid-west at the time. I went to [college name] and got involved in partying. I liked pot because I liked the spaceiness of it, I liked getting out of my head. But I got tired with that, it got boring and one of my friends said, "I am going to Majorca Spain." "I'm going to learn meditation with the Mahareeshi." He said, "you need to think about that, you might really like this mediation." He started talking about higher states of consciousness and I really started getting an inner excitement about that.

This was 73. So that year I started going through some transformations. I started becoming a vegetarian and started reading *Be Here Now* by Ram Dass. Just was going through my own inner awakening. Then in 74, it was Ground Hog's Day of 74, I learned transcendental meditation. I loved it. I loved the experience of it. I didn't necessarily like the organization, I loved the experience of meditation.

In Myrtle Beach is located a spiritual retreat, Meher Center, founded by Meher Baba. Followers of Meher Baba, and those people interested in finding out about him, visit the retreat during the day, or stay the night in cabins. Sam talks about his experiences at the Center.

But in 1974, August of 74, I went up to the beach with my buddy, this is the guy who I was going to be a roommate with, an old family friend. We were sitting on the beach and I said let's go in and see what's back there. So we walked in past the no entry gate, it said \$100 fine, and we said "nah, let's don't do that." So we came back out. But this kid was walking by with a surfboard and I just popped up and said, "excuse me do you know what's back here." The kid said, "Yeah, that's the Avatar Meher Baba Spiritual Center." "Oh, oh, that's Peter Townshend's guru." And he said, "Yeah," and we talked about going around to the gateway and entering there.

So, I got real excited and we walked back to the condominium and got my friend's car and drove around to the gateway, got out of the car at the gateway and unlocked the gate and this black cloud of mosquitoes descended on us, like nothing I had ever seen before. Get this, we got back in the car and went back to the condominium. The next morning I woke up and said I wanted to go find out about this Baba thing and my friend said, "I want to go play golf. Come on let's go play golf. My dad and his father were going and wanted us to go. I said no, I want to go to the Center. They went to play golf, I walked in from the beach, right past the no entry gate. Remember in the old days it was all wooded and wonderfully lush down there.

It [the dirt road] made a little s curve there, just past the parking area and all of a sudden my heart went ‘womp’ and my heart opened up and I began to weep profusely, and I said to myself, I’m home, I’m home. It was real clear. It was absolutely laid out in my heart that I was truly home. I had searched all my life, even though I was only 21 years old, all my life for this one moment of being home. It was just exquisite. So my heart remained open and I went running up the path and tried to find some gate, went up to the gateway, tears streaming, just totally blissed out from this grace. Fred Winterfeldt was working there, he walked up and saw me in my state and had compassion for that and the first thing he said was, “Who are you and where are your shoes.” [A Meher Center rule is that guests are required to wear shoes.]

So anyway that’s how I came to Baba. Came in through the back door.

That was August of 1974, I spent the whole day at the Center. My heart knew I was home. Never a question about that. My mind though is churning. I hadn’t experience spiritual experiences like this before so my mind is going what is this,’ but every question I had I got the answer.

Sam expressed his fear that he might be getting mixed-up in a cult of some kind.

I was aware that my critic, my doubting part, was saying I don’t want to be taken a fool. I am a Leo, so I have this pride. I didn’t want to join something, be a part of something and then a couple of years down the line be this big fraud, this Meher Baba movement is a fraud. I didn’t want to get involved in anything like that. Even though my heart was seeing it, my mind was cynical and critical.

Sam went on further to speak about the kind of transformation that was taking place in him. He calls it a “shift in consciousness.”

It is a shift from the mind and the heart. And in simple terms that is what it’s about. My life for the most part had been head focused. For the first time in my life it became heart focused.

The simple image I have in my mind is that there are sensitivities of the heart. Sometimes I listen to music with my heart, sometimes I see with my heart, sometimes I taste with my heart. It almost feels like it is a separate set of senses. When I am that heart focused all the senses are reaching out and perceiving and absorbing at a much different level than intellect. And that is what it’s about.

I asked Sam what it was like following a spiritual master who wasn’t physically present.

Well, the limited view is that he died in 1969. But we all experienced that he was not that physical body anyway. That’s why the ancient one is such a gift. That’s why, it never made sense to me that God would only come as Jesus. In one epoch of time and then He’s stingy the rest of creation, the rest of time. It never made any sense. So, with Baba’s insights it is real clear that of course there is that fresh dispensation of truth, time and time again. And it is timeless too. Which is wonderfully refreshing when you see someone praying to Abraham or to Buddha or to Jesus now and still have that connection.

Sam commented numerous times about the importance of both love and

grace in his spiritual life.

It's the essence of what it is about. The heart center, the approach to life. It feels most central. Everything else is just swirling dust.

It is that unconditional love that is indefinable but it is unconditional. Sweet and it is fragrant and it is heart opening and it is sufficient.I realized what Baba was about was love.Love. Nothing else makes me stick [to Meher Baba]. It is that sense, as I said earlier trying to define love is futile, but the quality of heart feltness, open-heartedness, peacefulness, centeredness and rightness. There is a rightness when one is believing and practicing love.

Not guarded love but an open love and it is playful. One of the best things I've loved about Baba is playfulness. He wants us to play here. And we take it so seriously and it is all so Baba says if you do this you shouldn't do this and all this mental bullshit which is totally unnecessary. Because we are here to play. To find God. To find out the humor, hopefully. That was one of the ways I try to find God - through laughter.

[Grace is] The gift of gifts. Because it is one thing to meet a perfect Master, it is another thing to have a connection with the ancient one. So that was just a fundamental shift in my consciousness at that point.

[Being at Meher Center] It is just that deeper level of grace. And in India I even

found it more profoundly. Of course that sense of the hand of God. In life the hand of God is right here.

When talking about the approaches he uses to follow Meher Baba, one of the main points Sam made was about creating companionship with his master through remembrance.

The dynamic is a couple of things. One is the power of his name. Which to me is part of the companionship. What this whole path is about, if you want to call it that, that sounds almost limiting, it is not that narrow. What it is about as I practice it is an ongoing companionship with this Lord, this Ancient One. Such that he becomes more intimate than any other relationship. In that intimacy secrets are shared, weakness are exposed, doubts are healed, all the psychological baggage historically I might have hidden is free to just be there. That sense of self-acceptance comes from that openness. So, there is a feeling of acceptance of whatever and in the process of that is a greater ability to love.

Because I think love is diminished by one's own blocks, self doubts and low self esteem and psychological baggage of any sort doesn't allow us to fully manifest the love that is inside. So, this constant companion is not physical and it is not definable other than it's his name, it's sometimes it is intuitive, a feeling that I get, many times it is hanging out with God or Baba. In the mundane things like one of them is singing songs in the radio. Sometimes I imagine Baba is there listening and so it is bringing his presence into a lot of different situations.

So that is what it is about. The simplest way to perceive it is to go with

constant companionship.

There is a quietness that goes with it. When I am in my mind and not in companionship then it is noisier, it is confusing, less certainty, more judgmental, more cynical, critical, all those things that go with the mental energy. And yet, when I am in my companionship and my heart space, it is so much simpler because there is a feeling of whatever your doing is okay.

Sam made the point that he continues to meditate today, and that he considers his approach to following Meher Baba as devotional in nature. Meditation, reading books written by Meher Baba, being with others who follow him and traveling to India and Meher Center are all expressions of that devotion.

I use Baba's name for my mantra. Sometimes I fill in the old Sanskrit word or two but generally I use Baba's name and it takes a constant remembrance on my part. To me a true spiritual life is that it is all devotional.

Satsong, you know the term 'satsong.' When you are around people, other spiritual aspirants there is a synergy of energies. That is a wonderful treat for me. My spiritual energy by myself is X and when I am in companionship with other spiritual seekers and sharing experiences or interest or developments or whatever is squares it to two-X or three-X.

In relation to the importance of spending time with other people who are focused on their own spiritual life, Sam spent some time especially talking about being with the close disciples - called mandali - of Meher Baba in India.

They are open. There is an openness there. There is not a sense of

guardedness with the mandali. I was saying earlier, as people remove their boundaries and they remove their emotional and psychological blocks, they are just open and they are just available. What begins to manifest is that sense of love and that unconditional love and that's what blew me away. Again, early on I thought the mandali would be these spiritual giants and these kind of condescending, I'm above you, kind of energy. That was just initially, then when I realized what Baba was about was love, it made perfect sense. People are just evolved into a deeper level of love.

As alluded to above, traveling to India plays an important part in Sam's spiritual life. When I asked him to describe his experience of India he replied:

Magical, blissful, polar. India, I have no real affinity for India. It is loud, it is obnoxious, it is polluted, the land is wasted. It is so far away from what nature intended because it is such an ancient land the people have worn it out, at least where I was, it's wasted. So you have this polarity of this God-forsaken land, in the old terminology, and yet the pinnacle of spiritual bliss right there. In the middle of this desert. So, that has always been interesting to me. You know, Baba's center in Myrtle Beach is more of what I expected in India.

Would I go back, yeah. I went in 1982, 1989, and 1996. Every seven years I seem to have a rhythm of going back. The first time I went alone. The second time Betty and I went, the third time all [immediate family] of us went.

I mean there are times in the tomb [Meher Baba's tomb at Meherabad] that are

very special and then there are times that are very mundane.

We tend to force spirituality. Now I'm in the tomb I should only think pure thoughts and all this stuff and think all kinds of mundane things. Many times I'm up there going, oh I am going to be late for breakfast, I'd better get down and you know,' it is just the human mind, a human being. But it is a wonderful spot. It feels like the generation station. In certain ways.

In Baba's room, [At Meherazad, where he lived the final years of his life.] in many ways it is almost too much for me at times. There have been times when I have been in Baba's room, that it is just too much. I just have to leave, whoa, I can't take a full dose of it. Yeah, it wasn't all the time. It depended on how receptive I was. I will draw out a negative analogy. It is kind of like going to a crowded restaurant that is very noisy and it is like whoa, it is like too much stimulation, you have to leave. This is not a negative experience, it is a positive experience where there is just too much sweetness. It is like smelling 100 jasmines at once. Or gardenias. It is almost too much. And that's what it is like. Or it is like hooking yourself up to some kind of electronic generator and holding on to the lead, you are given this jolt of electricity and then finally you have to drop it. It is too much on your system.

At times I felt really filled up, like my heart was overflowing. At times I felt like I was being cut up, where the psychological stuff that was going on inside of me was just being extracted. The experience is sometimes even the intensification of a worry or intensification of a psychological issue or fear or

doubt. It gets stirred up and then it is given off. It may be an illusion or whatever but it seems to be cleansing. It is brought up and my notion is it is our responsibility to give it back to Baba.

At this point, Sam began to talk about the importance of letting go or surrendering to the master.

Give it back. The baggage that we carry. This is about reawakening it and making it conscious again and then giving it up. To me surrender is not an event but it is a life style. Giving it up whether it is an attachment, whether it is a psychological issue, whether it is a desire, whatever, it is about giving it up, letting it go.

We'll talk more about that this afternoon but many times in my office where I am at a really frustrating spot with a client and I just ask Baba to take this frustration. I am going to freak out here, please take this. Give me strength, you know. I give things up when I ask for things many times throughout my day.

Sam also spoke about going to Meher Center in very much the same manner as he spoke about going to India.

Here in life I get synchronic events periodically. But when I am at the Center it is closer to that. It is like I really want to meet somebody for dinner tonight and somebody will walk in the door.

At the same time, Sam also is going to meetings less and less over the years. I asked him if there was a group with which he identified.

Not really, there is the [local group]. But it is sporadic. My attendance is

sporadic.

Sam also spoke about Meher Baba and spiritual dogma.

One of the things I love about Baba is that he was right on about dogma. So, when I mention in conversation that I was in India, and people say “oh where did you go?” I say, “well I went to the Ahmednagar Meher Baba Spiritual Center in India.” “Oh, well, that’s interesting, now, what classes did you take?” That’s a real common question. “Did you meditate like three or four hours a day, did you do Yoga?” All the typical traditional practices that people would assume that we would do at this retreat center, none of that is done. It is puzzling for people but to me it is the essence of what this is about. It is whatever you want it to be.

Absolutely not [a lot of set or routine practices going on in India]. There’s nothing in a sense other than life. There still is the tomb as a source of strength and sustenance. So, yes there is meditation on a regular basis when you go up to the tomb. But you don’t have to do anything different now. That’s why I’ve never had a connection with any other religions, because it is too diluted and this is so pure.

Love. Nothing else makes [me] stick [to Meher Baba]. It is that sense, as I said earlier trying to define love is futile, but the quality of heart feltness, open-heartedness, peacefulness, centeredness and rightness. There is a rightness when one is believing and practicing love. Right is the sense of being purposeful, being on the right beam, so to speak.

At different points, Sam made references to what was going on inside of himself -

intrapsychically - aside from his feelings of love and of his heart being opened up.

He becomes more intimate than any other relationship. In that intimacy secrets are shared, weakness are exposed, doubts are healed, all the psychological baggage historically I might have hidden is free to just be there. That sense of self-acceptance comes from that openness. So, there is a feeling of acceptance of whatever and in the process of that is a greater ability to love. Because I think love is diminished by one's own blocks, self doubts and low self esteem and psychological baggage of any sort doesn't allow us to fully manifest the love that is inside.

Reincarnation is fundamental. It is truly fundamental. Especially as a psychotherapist. When I am sitting with people and I see them struggling and it is never ever made sense to me that there would only be one lifetime. Never ever. Even the whole Christian one shot I call it. The Christian one shot [one life time] just never sat with me, it just never made sense.

Sam's Therapeutic Practice

The second interview was concerned with Sam's therapeutic practice, and how his spiritual life influences that practice. I began by asking Sam to describe his training as a therapist, the kind of supervision he had as well as the kinds of theory that has been important to him.

I got out of undergraduate school in psychology and economics. Then I worked two years at a treatment center for children and adolescents. Residential treatment center in [the mid-west]. What that taught quite simply was that the kids would get better or more behaviorally oriented compliant during the week

and then we would send many of them home on home visits and they would come back on Sunday night just wild as March hares. I started thinking about reading about systems therapy and looking at the larger picture and started looking for training programs in psychotherapy, more of a systems approach. Found two programs, actually three. I decided to go to [name college] program. They admitted nine students and six matriculated. So I had a graduate program of six people. A terminal masters program. You didn't get any summer vacations, it was two years straight. It was psychotherapy training. The two directors, one was an analyst who would fly up from [city near by] three days a week and the other someone from the [name of city] Child Guidance Clinic. He handled the systems part. So the two years were just wonderfully rich because you had analytic and systems approach. It just so happens that the third person, the other director, was not only a systems therapist but he was a transpersonal psychologist. So I had every level. It was great. You started in September and by October you were seeing clients. I was the youngest in the program at 25. A lot of people had been out of school for years. So, it was just a real find even though the weather sucked.

It was great. I can't imagine a better program. I had intensive individual and group supervision. I saw the analyst one hour every other week and I saw the systems person one hour every other week. So I had weekly individual supervision, then we had two or three hours a week group supervision. Then I did a training program in psychosynthesis which is a transpersonal model, two hours a week, in addition. It was just great. My case load was probably 10 or 12 a week

in addition to that.

I did some co-therapy and ran a group, and all this was just crammed into the two years. Because of the psychotherapy training you basically got a week here and a week there, you were still seeing clients all summer and it was just a taste of the real world. It was such a blessing.

I never became a devotee of anybody, it is very common in training programs for somebody to latch on to a certain person. I liked Virginia Satir's group. It is very heart centered and compassionate and I liked the feel of Erickson and the progressive hypnotherapy approaches. Then I was drawn to psychosynthesis, and one of the supervisors had been trained in it. Actually gave two hours of his week, every week to teach us. So, you know anything about psychosynthesis?

It is not complex. It is just basically this guy named Assagioli, an Italian psychiatrist who basically came up with this idea that what we suffer from is repression of the sublime. He said Freud really dealt with repression of the unconscious but what really has happened is that we are suffering from repression of the sublime. His goal was to create harmony in a personality level and let the higher self speak through. It is really good stuff, straight forward

I think I am drawn more to transpersonal. People say, "what is your technique?" I will say it's my experience in life.' I mean it is just being on the planet 45 years. My life experiences, it is kind of where I am coming from. Understanding that some people may or may not mesh with that. Most often they

do. I trust God to deliver. I really say this regularly, I trust God to deliver the people to me who need to be here. That has worked impeccably. So if you look at the quality of my clients. Generally, they are people who are in acute psychological distress but many times right under the surface or right at the surface is a spiritualness.

Sam spoke further about the nature of his practice and the kinds of clients he will see.

It is primarily word of mouth. So wonderfully, the people who are drawn to me initially and do the work on their mind, body and spirit, are the ones who tell their friends and I have this ongoing flow of people very similar in makeup. You know, some of them are depressed, some of them are anxious, some are hysterical. But it is kind of self-selecting. It is been a real blessing.

Occasionally I see other therapists. I see 60% women, about 40% men. I do probably 80% of my work is individual work and then 20% couples, family. Basically, all income ranges. I don't work with the very poor. Although sometimes I do, but these are people who maybe had health insurance. A lot of people still have 80-20 coverage so they can come in and pay me less than \$20 a visit and still see me and that is workable for most people. Baba's very graceful. This one guy I am working with, I just see him for free. His insurance pays a little bit, can't afford anything else. There are times when that fits.

The money thing generally takes care of itself. If people are sincere about their work they do it, and if they are not, that's fine, they can go elsewhere.

Generally speaking it works out. I need to charge something or people won't value it.

That's the upper limits [to the number of people he sees in a day.]. What I like to do is six a day. Nine, ten, eleven, one, two, three. That's great. I will load up to eight. So I'll do nine, ten, eleven, one, two, three, four, five. Then I quit. Very, very rarely maybe once a year I do nine. I only work four days a week. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. No Wednesday.

Sam commented that he sometimes works with people who have addictions.

Many people have addictions. Yeah, I don't work with people who are out of control with substances, I just won't see them. Somebody recently called me on the phone and said my wife is drinking too much, she's cut her wrist a couple of years ago and on and on. And I said well, you call me after she is in a twelve step program and she has dried out. Go to the ATC. Get her some help for the alcohol problems and then call me back and we will do some marriage counseling. I'm not going to spend my time and their money fiddling around with that.

Baba says "become addicted to me. Because every other addiction is going to look bad." So, in just a strict definitional sense, I would be addicted to God right now. Because if somebody said, "you have to give up God," I couldn't do it. I couldn't do that. I wouldn't want to and I couldn't do it. Somebody said I could never have another drink of alcohol, never have sex again, but if somebody said you had to give up God right now, am I addicted to God, in a strict sense, in a loose sense, not in a strict sense but in a loose sense, yeah. Is it a problem, no.

Because it is the only addiction that doesn't really have a number of side effects.

Divinity is our birthright, and that's exactly what the twelve-step program is.

Sam considers his approach a 'holistic' in nature.

What I call my style is a holistic psychotherapy. Because if someone comes in and says they are anxious and I don't ask about their caffeine use then I am not being a good therapist. So, if somebody comes in with an upset stomach with anxiety, spicy foods, it is all inter connected. What I hope people do for the first couple of sessions is just to get them involved in this model. Again, many people that come to me are already open to that model. Some do that for the first time and it is all one unit. I begin to help them see that. So, I do, I categorize it in five terms. Holistic Psychotherapy. I look at the emotional, the intellectual, the physical, social and the spiritual. That is how I present it to folks. I say, probably by the second interview I've gotten the sense of where they are, what their weaknesses are, look at these five areas and tell me where you are weak. Once you find balance in that you are going to be ready to move on. For most people they've got enough intellectual material. Okay? They are probably under served at a heart level.

Most people have good social connections. Some don't. Most people do. They are light spiritually because they are still in whatever their drama is. So that's what the work tends to be. Usually about emotions, then about spirit. And also about physical. Because it just so happens in talking that my interest in nutrition goes back to the early seventies. It has been a passion of mine from way

back and real easy when someone comes in and says I'm depressed, which is a common complaint. First thing I say is okay, what kind of exercise program do you want to do? Not are you going to but what kind do you want to be involved in? They say, "do you think I need medication." And I say, "let's try exercise, let's try some dietary changes, let's try some St. John's wort, let's try all these things before you go on meds."

Sam described how he approaches talking to his clients about their spirituality in their sessions together.

We're living in the Bible belt so most people have some kind of historical religion. What I do initially is ask them some general questions, name and address, routinely I ask religious preference or spiritual direction. That gives a wide spectrum for them. They will say, "well, I was raised Catholic." I say, "is that meaningful for you now?"

First questions. Address, name, phone number, spiritual direction, religious preference. Don't even hesitate. Nobody ever goes this is none of your business. It is just matter of fact. And that is how we deal with spirituality in the session, just matter of fact.

In order to clarify what he meant I asked: "So with that in mind when you start talking about psychological help, because presumably that is why they come to you, right away you bring in the spiritual direction and you begin to ask them about their spiritual life?"

Generally, not initially, unless they are coming in with that issue. Some people come in and they say, I am at a cross roads, I am searching, I've read Scott Peck's book and I am searching for my spirituality. We will go right in to it. Early on after we do the psychological stuff I will do a genogram on people. I'll get a sense of what their family history is. And I will say I am not an analyst, not going to keep you here for years, get in here and figure out what's going on, how you can balance yourself.

So these people are repressing their sublime qualities. Then you let them talk about it, and affirming it is such a wonderful thing. They start to blossom because spirit is the underlying fundamental of all of us. As you establish enough trust for them to begin to piece together some of the psychological issues, the spirit comes in. So much of it is spirit.

As Ram Dass said recently before his stroke, he said, "I've been in therapy on and off for about 40 years. I don't know that I am further along but I am so much more compassionate with my neurosis." I love that. That is exactly what I am talking about. I may not change the personality structure but I am going to, a) make them more compassionate for their foibles, and b) let the spirit flow through those things and do the healing of the spirit.

I then asked him: "In what ways do you let the spirit do that, is it you bringing your spiritual life, how does your spiritual life impact that?"

Good question. It is situation specific. If somebody is coming in here and they say I attend the Free Will or the Fundamentalist Baptist Church. I am not

going to talk about reincarnation straight away. But for many people, once you have a relationship, you have license to say whatever you need to say. For both parties. There is a sense of trust, there is a sense of openness. I say, "So in your own model do you believe in nothingness after death, heaven or hell or another incarnation." You would be surprised how many people say, "well, I've been thinking more about reincarnation." It is just a matter of just asking those questions. A lot of people say, "well my Christian faith says" . . . I say, "I understand that, but what do you believe? What is your deepest intuition?"

Eighty percent of them will say, "Oh, I don't know, I've started thinking about reincarnation." I say, "well, you know, I am open to talk about that. So, that's true for me, and again whatever I say is true for me doesn't have to be true for you, okay."

I say, "I have full belief that God is individualized for each individual. So what I am in to doesn't have to be what you are in to." Then I question them and I draw it out. I draw it out. But I challenge when people say, "well I was raised Baptist and I have always been a Baptist." And I say, "but is that meaningful?" They say, "yes." "That's cool. You feel a connection with God. You have a daily companionship with God."

Sam spoke about the nature of the therapeutic relationship and how he approaches it with his clients.

You can see the power relationship in the therapeutic hour is probably one of the least understood because it is so nebulous. You are coming in as a client,

hypothetical, you're coming in to experts. You are paying me money to give expert advice. Okay? But the reality is you know yourself a lot better than I do. I know patterns, I know my own life. So early in the session, maybe the first or second visit, I tell people, "let's get one thing straight, you are the expert on you, not me. I can be a coach, I can give you a roadmap, but you are the expert on you. You have lived in your body 40 something years, I've known you two hours." That is threatening at some level but it is also liberating.

You be real, I'll be real and let's see what happens. There's a lot of bullshit involved. Transference and counter transference and all the other old traditional approaches. Yeah, does it happen? Yeah, of course there are transference and counter transferences but if both parties are actively working toward being real, it is going to happen a lot less.

I asked if he lets his clients call him at home:

No, unless there is some arranged issue. I let them call my voice mail. I've got this one anorexic I'm working with. She wakes up at four in the morning and she is really upset. She's been raped and it is traumatic for her. She calls at four in the morning and talks to my voice mail. It doesn't wake me up, I just pick it up the next morning

Sam also spoke about the importance of love in his practice.

A part of the celebration of life is to give love. In simple terms that is what I am doing. I don't want to have any body misconstrue the love as being a physical love, or a sexual love or anything like that. It is a much deeper love than that. It is a sense of

honoring that person. He's been sent here to learn how to love. Love themselves and then the world. First you have to love self. You talk about simple issues, that's all it is. Call it depression, call it anxiety, call it neurosis, it's all about the lack of love for self.

I commented that "it seems to me that you are talking about selfless love in a certain way, rather than narcissism, a selfish love."

Yeah, because in my experience, narcissism isn't about love, it is about survival. It is very unattractive, off balance, you really can't call it love. It is just infatuation with self. When I'm talking about love, I'm talking about a depth, feeling of quality of depth, as being important.

Sam also spoke about the kinds of techniques he uses with his clients.

I teach meditation to probably 30% of my clients. I teach mantra meditation and also mindfulness meditation, more breathing focused, watching the breath in and out, similar to mantra, but little more here and now.

Yes. [He gives homework.] Whatever comes up. There may be a week when we are sitting there and they say, "I really like that about myself. I really like the way I deal with my co-worker." I have them write it down, stick that on the mirror, think about that.

Or, they say I read this passage in a book. Go home and read that every night before you go to bed. Because most people's minds and hearts left unchecked will go to negativity. It is like a default setting, it just flips into that. So if you grow up in any kind of dysfunctional family and quite honestly most families are dysfunctional, you've got this old tape running, you're not good

enough, you're ugly, you're stupid, and feet smell and all this stuff runs unconsciously so people have to begin to be more conscious. That they are children of God and they are deserving.

There are times when solution [solution focus therapy] are great. A person comes in and they are feeling real anxious and pulling their hair out, and you say how much caffeine, well I drink 12 cups of coffee a day and then I have a few no-doz in the evening. Let's change that. Does it change how their mother treated them when they were young. No. We have great insight now but change exactly what you're seeing.

Sam also does some marriage and family therapy.

I start more traditionally with marital, looking at communications, but again first questions, spiritual direction or religious preferences, same thing. Looking at what is the underlying issue here. Most couples that come to therapy have already had a crisis. Occasionally not, it is wonderful when you get a couple who comes in, "we've been married three years and our sexual life has fallen off a little bit and I am just getting a little bit sour here and we just need a tune up." Ahh, great. See them three times maybe and they are tuned up and they go on. What tends to happen is that you get a frantic call from a wife. "I've just found out my husband is having an affair. I am at the end of my rope, I need to see you." Okay, so that's the beginning. It is much more, trust has been violated, marital vows have been violated, you have to ask the woman in this case to have blind faith again, because if she doesn't she's going to create the same outcome. So,

marriage work is difficult. But, I will bring in the reality at some point that you guys are together for a reason. You've got to figure out what the reason is.

I'll say, "I don't think God makes mistakes. You guys are here for a reason, what are you here to teach each other. Because each of you is a student and each of you is a teacher." And that starts to draw them out a little instead of saying "you're a bitch, you're a bastard." "Whoa, wait a minute, I'm not a judge, I'm not here to find fault, I'm not even going there. If you want a judge, go down the street and find a judge. I'm not going to do that. What I am here to do is find out what the lessons are. You are here for a reason, right? You are here to figure out what your lessons are for each other." When they start to understand that not only a teacher and a student in this relationship, it starts to soften. Then you start to pull the patterns. Because I see the couple together twice, generally, and then I see each individual alone twice, okay, then you get the insights.

Sam commented on how his work in the world was an expression of his spirituality.

One and the same. If it isn't then I am not doing something right. I am too much up in my head, I am too much into a textbook, or something like that.

When asked if it was an expression of devotion, he answered:

Absolutely. It is pure service. If I can get myself out of the way, look who's left. Because anything of spirit is central. I think we are here to find spirit. We are in the growth school to find the spiritual, the sublime, so if I can invoke God, if I can invoke angels, higher beings to come in and use my vehicle, use my

presentation then I am doing truly a service.

I asked Sam how much of his growth as a person can be attributed to his spiritual or to normal human maturation.

It is just life. Everything is inherently spiritual. So, insights from life, you know, you invest in a stock and it tanks out. Did you learn something, absolutely. Learn all kinds of things about life. Try something new or not taking risks, it is all inter-connected, the mundane and the sublime are inter-connected. One of my goals is to continue to see more of the sublime.

I also asked how is therapeutic practice has influenced his spiritual life?

It is one in the same. It is. It is part of being, part of choosing consciously the best options we have available. That is the key, you know. Little choices: what we eat, how we practice, what we do in our sessions, how we bless, everything. If you are in a blessing mode your life becomes prophetic. That's what I want to create.

Paul

Paul is a male Caucasian, fifty-one years old. He received his undergraduate degree in education from an American university, a master's degree in psychology also from an American university, and a Ph.D. in counseling, again, from an American university. Paul grew up in the United States in a Jewish family, where religion played no distinctive role in his household. He has been practicing psychotherapy for over twenty-five years, and has been in private practice for nineteen years. In addition, Paul has been a follower of Meher Baba for 28 years.

I met with Paul on two occasions, mid October of 1999 and early December of 1999. Both interviews were conducted at a secluded spot on Meher Center in Myrtle Beach. The place where we met is set back in the woods, away from both automobile and foot traffic, providing a very quiet atmosphere. Having known Paul for at least fifteen years, I was quite comfortable going into our conversation. At the same time, I felt the recurrent concern that I might not be able to draw him out in ways that hit at the heart of his spiritual life and professional identity. I thought that perhaps familiarity might work against the process: either he would assume I already knew some of his story, or because we are from the same spiritual community, I would take his meanings for granted and not ask probing enough questions to uncover deeper threads behind his story. Paul was very open, straightforward and economical in his descriptions, elaborating sparsely on the points he made. I found that it took very little probing for him to go to deep and personal levels concerning both his spiritual and professional life.

Paul's Spiritual Life

I asked Paul how he entered into his spiritual life.

I grew up in a Jewish home, and went to Hebrew school from age six to thirteen, when I was barmitzvahed. After that I was home free. I never went to Temple. There was really no religion practiced in our home - during the holidays we never did anything in the home. I think the only time I remember my father in Temple was when he came to my barmitzvah.

In 1968 a girl that I was dating told me about a fellow that was living in a cave and hadn't spoken for 35 years, 40 years. She told me something of the fact that his name was Meher Baba and I thought about that. As life has things pass right through it, I then continued going to college at the [school name].

Then she would mention it occasionally and that would be the end of that. Then in 1969 for a birthday present a lady by the name of [person's name] gave me a book called An Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda.

I read that. I graduated from college and I was teaching in [name of place], 7th grade, and was miserable. I read that and I decided this is it. This is the best thing since chocolate covered raisins. So then I wrote to Self-realization Fellowship a letter. It was Yogananda's organization in California. I said, listen, this is wonderful, I need to do something in terms of following up on this. So they started sending me every week. Spiritual lessons. Yogananda before he dropped his body [died] devised a series of lessons that he would send to people out of the area every week. They were techniques on how to meditate. So every

week I would get these lessons and then I would get up at six in the morning and before I went to bed for two hours each time I would read the lessons, do the techniques and practice meditation. I started doing that in the winter of 1970.

I was very committed to Yoganonda's path and I have to say that I had some very profound spiritual experiences that were very, very powerful. One experience I had when I was in [name of state], I was living on a farm and I was doing my meditation. I finished my meditation, I was in bed at this point. I had just gotten into bed and I was saying to myself, you know I am so tired of this, I am taking these meditations, I think about God, but I never have any experiences with God. At that point, my body starts stiffening like a block of cement. In fact it became dead weight. I got scared, and I said uh oh, and I stopped it. I just got scared and it stopped. Then it happened again. It was like my body, it was like I was dying. It became absolutely stiff, I couldn't move it and it started levitating off the bed.

It levitated about six feet off the bed. It started rotating counter-clockwise. There was this power surge. I was very frightened, I was scared to death. But I kept saying, okay, I'm really scared here but I really love God and I am going to give myself to God and give up my body. Because I felt it was a form of death.

As I kept trying to surrender these power surges were coming in and then all of a sudden I had all these visions of all the desires I had, food desires and stuff. I realized, I am ready to go to God and I can't give up cake and ice cream. I levitated back down. It happened several times but I rotated, so when I got back

to the bed I thought I should be rotated 90 degrees but I wasn't rotated. I realized at that point actually my body never left. My spiritual body came out and that's what was rotated. Anyway, that scared the living stew out of me, but that was one experience.

Then many months later I was living in [name of city] and I was meditating at night. Each Yogananda lesson had a particular technique. He was creating a yoga called kundalini yoga [a yoga that focuses on breath and energy]. I got to this technique where he was saying that each of the shakaras [points along the spine] symbolically are different celestial sound. Like there is a flute, there is a harp. The shakaras have sounds and they are celestial sounds. I was doing this meditation and you know you can meditate for months, and just not experience anything, it is very frustrating. And I was sitting there and all of a sudden I heard these celestial sounds. Now Buz you don't hear these sounds. They come from the deepest part of who you are and they vibrate through your system and there was something that was so beautiful and it just elevating. The sound started going up my spinal column, every one, and then it got to hear and my head exploded and I saw this third eye. There was this beautiful bluish third eye. Then it ended.

Then one other time I was sitting meditating and waves of golden bliss, not happiness but bliss started entering my body. Waves and waves upon waves and I started losing consciousness. It only happened for about 20 seconds. Those were those yoga experiences.

Paul then spoke about his coming to follow Meher Baba.

When I went down to [name of state] in the spring of that year [1970] my friends were picking up on Meher Baba. So we decided at that point to go to India. What we wanted to do was since Yogananda dropped the body, we wanted to find a living master that we could study with in an ashram. So we bought our plane tickets in April of 1971, that's when we flew off.

One thing I forgot to say is during the spring of that year I visited the Meher Spiritual Center because some people were going. I met Kitty Davy [older disciple who lived at Meher Spiritual Center] and I told her I was going to India to become a Monk and she said, "well, that is great but why don't you go at least go by and visit Meher Baba's stuff, just out of respect." I said, "well I can do that." Okay. So that was my plan to go by and visit Meher Baba's place and then go to Ganeshpuri [City in India] and study with Muktananda [spiritual master who was living at the time]. So I met this guy in Bombay and I got on a train and then I traveled directly to Ahmednagar, took me two days. So I walked in Adi K.'s [early disciple of Meher Baba] office at six o'clock in the morning one day and he started yelling at me. You know, he told me to go back to bed. That afternoon I walked back over to the compound in Ahmednagar [small city near Meher Baba's home]. I think Dr. Goher [early woman disciple] and Mehru [early woman disciple] were taking a car out to Meherazad [place where Meher lived the last years of his life] so they invited me to come along. You know, I had hair down to here, a long beard.

They drove me out there to Meherazad. Then I went to Mandali Hall and I stayed there for a while and then I went to Meher Baba's room and stayed there for awhile. That night I went back to the hotel. I was staying at the Ashoka [small hotel]. And all night, see I was mediating four hours a day, non stop for a year. So that was a good part of my life. All night long I couldn't sleep and my mind was "Meher Baba" and "Yogananda." The two words were going all night long. It was terrible.

In the morning I woke up and it was like I said Meher Baba's name and I never did Yogananda after that. I stayed there for three months, or two months. I came to Meher Baba at that point. That's my story. 1971.

I felt that I had so much Yoga impressions in my mind and I was so committed to this austere life, that I felt that entire night Baba had cleansed myself of those past impressions.

Before I was able to be free to accept that path. I was a young kid. I had bought a one-way ticket. I wasn't coming back. That is a huge step for someone who is 21 years old. So it was a very fierce part of my existence. So I felt like that had to be cleansed. Then after that I just felt Baba was my Master.

Well I think the most powerful thing that happened was, two things I think. On my first time to Meherabad [place of Meher Baba's tomb]. I had to take the local transportation, the buses. And I was always very angry that I never met a living Master. I was on this bus, this comes to mind now that we are talking, I haven't thought about it for twenty years, I was on the bus and the bus

was just stopping at Meherabad. I just got off the bus and some Indian came up to me, some Indian I had never met and obviously I didn't know him. And he looked at me and went like this (placed his hand on cheek) as I got off the bus and I felt there was something special about that. Sort of a peasant, to come up to me and do that to me. So, in a weird way I felt like Baba was disguised or something in this peasant and I had a physical contact with him.

The other experience was, I was sitting in, the Samadhi [Meher Baba's tomb] and I got very ill because I had some food poisoning. After that I was running a fever and I didn't go back for about a week because I was really suffering, you know how it is. So I went back about a week later and I was sitting in the tomb by myself and I had this incredible physical sensation, it wasn't an emotional sensation, it was physical, that my chest was opening up with some process of this love. All I could say was like someone took this container of love and poured it directly into my heart. It wasn't emotional, it was physical. I felt the love just surging through my system, it connected right there. Then after that I felt that the doubts were gone and I just knew that this was where I was supposed to be.

Paul also spoke about his experiences of meeting the close disciples of Meher Baba in India.

Well, I'm very shy and therefore I don't communicate very simply or very spontaneously with people I don't know. Especially back then. I was in awe because at that point remember I was on this Yoga path, I was very respectful of

what I felt were very holy individuals. So I would just sit around and pretty much keep to myself. I felt comfortable with Adi and I would go over to the compound every night and just chat with him. He was kind of gruff to begin with so that was kind of neat because it broke down my little holy thing. I think the experience with Mehera [older woman disciple] was profound. Just her presence was so magnificent and powerful and was very draining and tiresome but it wasn't that the emotion you felt was very, pleasant but it was beyond being pleasant, it was a powerful experience.

Paul commented on the absence of spiritual experiences since following Meher Baba, but did speak of several dreams he has had.

Once I came to Baba, other than experience in the tomb I haven't had experiences. I have had dreams of Baba. One dream I had was, this was right after India in 1971. I was living in Florida, going to graduate school. I was walking and Baba and Mani were walking towards me and they looked exhausted like they were worn out. I followed them and Baba went to a room, like a seclusion cabin. It was called the Rahori cabin.

So Baba and Mani [Meher Baba's sister] walked in, I was following them, I can't remember exactly, and I peeked in and Baba said to come in. So I walked in and I started crying hysterically and I kept saying I want to be with you, and I can't stay here any longer and I am tired of being here and I was just crying hysterically. I couldn't stop. And Baba got up and walked away from me and

walked to a cabinet and opened the cabinet and said, “you cannot this lifetime but I promise next lifetime, I promise.”

Love appeared to be an important theme in Paul’s spiritual life. At one point he referred to his experience in Meher Baba’s tomb on his initial trip to India in 1971.

I felt that was Baba coming into the heart. I felt that was Baba saying you are mine now. You are in my family and the connection is made. It doesn’t matter what you do, it is done, you are cemented in.

I felt that was the essence of love with Meher Baba, connecting with the essence of me. I didn’t think it was an ego thing it was an essence thing.

Well the role that it [love] plays is I am basically a failure. I mean you know, I muddle through life trying to find some essence and do what supposedly one should do to get close to that essence and I feel most of the time I fall short.

Love is the only value. I am not sure it’s love. I always say a value to me, I am not an abstractualist, a value to me is getting close to the personal aspect of God. Maybe not even the personal aspect of God, but I want to experience God. I am not so sure I want to experience Meher Baba. I want to experience the internal aspect of who Meher Baba was. So I don’t think I have a great need to come back and hang out with Meher Baba even though he said I am going to do that, I am hoping that somehow I can get away from that and go directly to the infinite without the veneer, without personality.

I mean for me the role failure plays in my spiritual life is I bump up against who I am every minute of the day. I mean I know the truth. I know the sense of destiny so my role is to keep bumping up against the wall until eventually one day it will crack and hopefully maybe that love will be stronger than the desires and there will be a breakthrough in some sense. But most of my experiences it is the hardness of the wall, not the love.

I asked him how he experiences his spiritual life every day.

I would say that I experience it in the sense of, to be honest, I would say it is a lot of frustration. You know. The frustration of knowing the reality and having the essence of the feeling that because of my inadequacies, I have never quite experienced that reality. And there's no way out. I mean, I can't get off this thing.

I feel that once Baba has decided you are part of his family, the limitations don't go away. You have to struggle with those and you have to see that you know you are not such a cool person and in many areas you know, you're a schmuck. But you belong to Meher Baba, so no matter what happens, you are Baba's and Baba is going to keep you with him and is going to drive you forward. It is just a question of how much suffering one imposes on themselves.

Paul spoke about any kinds of spiritual practices he performs during his daily life, including the importance of inner surrender.

What I do is several things. In the morning I say the Master's prayer [A prayer given by Meher Baba.] repetitively. I used to say it in front of Baba's

picture when I got up. I have been doing that for about 12 years now. But it always shifts and changes. Right now the way I do it, when I get into my automobile I say it repetitively, the Master's prayer and the Prayer of Repentance and the Beloved God prayer [all prayers given by Meher Baba], from when I leave my house until I get to my office. I do that every morning.

Then I have some prayer beads that I use to repeat Baba's name when I am in session, see right here. I don't do it all the time, but I do it when I feel like I want to do it. So while I am doing therapy I internally repeat Baba's name and then in the evening before I go to bed I say the prayers, the Master prayer and the prayer of repentance and the Beloved God prayer. That's what I do on a daily basis.

Well, the way I try to deal with it [sense of frustration in his life] is to surrender it. I've done it for 27 years. And when working with clients, I really try to work in the best interest of the people I am working with. I really work hard doing a good job. I am a very available therapist and I don't really know what's in this person's best interest. I don't know. All I know is that I am involved in a process with them and independent of my little quirkiness I am going to do the best thing I can for the best of that process that I can.

Surrender to me means a sense of just giving up, letting go of peculiar self-centered selfish kind of things that come into my brain. To allow things to develop in the sense of trust, and let go of my own need to control. It is really like having faith. Stepping out. That is tough to do.

Sometimes I feel it is freeing and I also feel it is a return to maturing process. You feel a little bit more centered, you feel maybe that you are pleasing and you are letting go, you are trusting more.

Paul's marriage also plays a big role in his daily spiritual life.

I think it's most important I married someone who follows Meher Baba and I think the essence of marriage is a struggle. It is a spiritual struggle to cleanse one's selfishness and self-centeredness. Because I am basically a fairly selfish person. Self-centered. The marriage pulls at me every other day because you've got to give that up and you don't want to give it up so it is another struggle. It is another struggle towards cleansing the system and I think the only role of marriage is a spiritual purpose.

I thought it was critical [to marry a Meher Baba follower]. Because, if you have that spiritual focus in common work towards that belief system and are able to discuss it openly and honestly I think that is a very critical factor.

It was Baba's wish. So that answers that. Not that marriage is easy. Marriage is a tough struggle for me. I see it to be a major part of my spiritual path. Because it is hard. I want to do all this stuff and I can't do all this stuff because I am married. I have to consider Betsy and her feelings and who she is and what she is and it keeps me in line.

I went out to see Kitty and said, "you know Kitty I don't know what to do with Betsy. I have this woman I'm dating, I'm not sure what to do." And, uh, she said, "well what is Betsy like." "Well Betsy is very devoted very nice." She said,

“well what are you like?” I said well, “I am not like Betsy, she is more loyal than I am and more devoted and I have a lot of friends and people that I like to see and visit.” Kitty said well, “you have a choice here.” She said, “you are the type of person that could go through life and have a lot of different experiences and enjoy a lot of different people and you will not grow spiritually at all.” Hahahaha. “So being committed will be a different spiritual experience for you.” I think Kitty was right on target.

At one point I asked Paul: “You also mentioned earlier, you said Baba wants me to. You said that a couple of times. I know Baba wants me to. . .I know Baba wants me to do something. How are you aware of what he wants?”

Well, because I have a very good internal sense of that. I am pretty good at it. Not that I follow it. But for whatever reasons I seem to have a pretty good idea in many ways of where I need to go and what I need to do. And that is the frustration because many times I don't follow that. But I can't say I am ignorant of the process.

That doesn't mean that I know what to do in all given situations, but it means basically I have a pretty good sense of where I should be and what I should be doing and what is important for me.

I think I was given a road map. I think there was something that was pushed into me that allowed me to have a deep feeling of where to go and what

decisions to make.

So I would say, I also feel a gratitude that for who I am and how I was raised and I have been a very fortunate person. I feel that comes directly from God's grace. I feel that Meher Baba has allowed me be where I am only because of his grace and compassion, not because of who I am and what I have achieved.

Paul spoke at length about the importance of Meher Center in his life.

In the early years, I wanted to be close to the center and I wanted to be close to people who followed Meher Baba. I wanted to be close to some of Baba's disciples. In the early years I used to go to the center a lot and I think it was very reinforcing and something I felt I couldn't stay away from.

But as everything in this life changes, that has change and shifted over the years. I think the center is a magical place and there is no question it is spiritually charged. But for whatever reasons over the years I don't seem to have an interest in going as frequently, especially the programs. I really don't seem to have much of an interest in going to the programs. I am not sure why. I get bored.

Jane [Follower of Meher Baba and past president of the Center.] once told me I was the first volunteer. I don't know if that is true or not. But years and years ago I used to volunteer. I've done a lot actually. Different things.

Paul also spoke about his relationship with some of the older disciples at the Center.

I didn't spend that much time with Elizabeth [One of the founders of the Center in the 1940's.]. I served on several boards with her, CBS or something. I would go see Kitty every week if I could. To me they are magical, special, spiritually pure people. So I just wanted to be in their presence. I wasn't so interested in what they were saying, I just enjoyed being close to them and I enjoyed being close to Jane. I felt Jane was very deeply charged with Meher Baba's talent and love.

On the place of service in general in his spiritual life, Paul said:

Well, obviously I am supposed to be here doing this [therapeutic work]. Baba wants me to do that. I feel the role of service is for me to involve myself in these people's lives and to in some way, on a deeper level unbeknownst to them, try to connect on some spiritual level. I do that very quietly and I try to remember that in my work

Paul also addressed what he called the lack of reinforcement in following Meher Baba.

Meher Baba does not give you, in my opinion, a lot of reinforcement. I think Baba's journey is a very scary journey without a lot of spiritual reinforcement. I mean Yogananda, look at those experiences I had. Powerful experiences, let's say I would have continued that path for 20 years, meditating four or five hours a day. I think there would have been a lot of spiritual reinforcement I am not saying that's in my best interest but I think it would have been there. Because I was following his technique's every single week and I was

on a path. In fact I was supposed to sign a commitment that he was my spiritual Master and get initiated to Crea Yoga and I wasn't able to sign it, and that day I left for India and I couldn't put my name to it.

So with Meher Baba over the years, there is less and less reinforcement and it forces me to go inward more. That's hard. You know I want somebody to give me something.

There are no initiations, no rituals. There is no real formal process, so you are really pretty much, in my opinion, on your own traveling with your self. What I like to say is that I am just trying to move forward, tired of myself. I want to go to a different level of spiritual understanding, whatever that means.

Paul's Therapeutic Practice

I asked Paul to talk about his training as a therapist, including any writings or theories that have influenced him over the years.

Originally, I guess I was trained in the basic counseling stuff, Rogers, Carkoff and that was formal training. Then I received some training when I worked at the [name of hospital] as a behaviorist. So I got token economies, behavioral contracting. When I transferred my position up to [name of city], I went for some training for some years in Gerstaldt and also transactional analysis, I became certified in that.

So, you know, I did some work as a reality therapist with Glasser and a lot of family work, human origin material, things of that nature. I've had various training modalities and I am not particularly, I don't consider myself one or the

other. I just use whatever works.

I graduated with a Master's degree in psychology [name of university] and then I went to work at [name of city] State Mental Hospital as an Industrial Therapist. I worked with the chronic population. At that time there was a federal law passed that inmates of State Mental Hospitals had to be paid a regular hourly rate or they couldn't work. So I was brought in to basically eliminate thousands of jobs and retool these people and retrain them. At that point mental hospitals were using inmate labor to provide sustenance to the hospital. In other words, they did all the laundry, they worked on farms and they did this and that. From there I was transferred to a behavioral mod program trying to retrain a chronic population to be released out into the community.

So I worked there for a year and half in token economy. In working actually I used to go into the back wards and interview people who had been hospitalized from five years up to forty years. We had to decide which ones we would put into this program and then try to get them out.

Then I moved to [name of city] and was hired as an Addiction Specialist and was involved with setting up most of the addiction programs in three counties. Provide treatment services, education services, programs and stuff. I did that for seven years. Then I was Director of the [name of city] Mental Health Center and was involved with providing programs and services to [name of city].

Then I became coordinator for all the satellites in the three counties. Eventually, I became Director of the [name of city] Mental Health Center. I

wanted to get back to [name of city]. I coordinated that office for several years. I think I was in Mental Health for 12 years and then I was hired as a Mental Health Analyst to provide treatment services, assessment services for the county. I just handled all the mental health issues. And I've been doing that for 13 years. I have been doing private work for the past 15-18, 19 years.

In describing his practice Paul said:

I see a high level, high talent, most everyone I see has at least a college education. Either they are professional people, high income bracket, very aware people, and individuals who are committed to doing some work. I do long term therapy, I do not do short term intervention.

Most clients I see for a year, two years, minimum. On a weekly or biweekly basis. I don't believe in short term therapy. I feel that it has been set up for the insurance industry. Maybe in a given situation it may be fine for a particular type of issue. But most of the issues I deal with are family of origin issues or long term marital problems or long term relationship problems and I do not feel short term therapy enters that process effectively.

I like the people I work with. I mean, you know, at the Mental Health Center for 12 years I worked with very difficult cases and it was tough. These people are more engaging. Maybe that is my limitation. They are bright, they're creative, they challenge me, they force me to dig deep to come up with ways to help them. So I have a great population.

Paul referred to his work as spiritual service.

I try to strive for the fact that it is a service, a spiritual service. I can't say I feel that way all the time, but occasionally I hit that.

Paul made several statements about when he talks about spirituality into his sessions.

I don't think that there is anything that I would do that I didn't relate to on some spiritual level because I don't feel like there is any real purpose to be around other than that.

I may do that [bring up spirituality] in the initial aspects of the interview. Just to get a sense of where they are and their religious orientation and how that affects their issue or concern or whatever. But I will wait, months and months and months before I might say, "hey, you know there is some interesting stuff out there." I never start off with Meher Baba. I don't know why, I always start off with Yogananda, and say why don't you look at this stuff, it is kind of interesting. If they hit that pretty well then we will talk about other types of things.

I think your spiritual function is in every aspect of your life and so you know we just have to get down to the bottom line. And I might say if we are talking about existential therapy, I might say, "well you know Plato says nothing really has any value except these ultimate truths, so basically you know unless we tie into that most of our lives is rambling around into nothingness." I've got a guy right now, he's a very bright guy, and we talk back and forth about that once he got stabilized and once he started making some progress in his other stuff.

See, you can't deal with this in many ways unless there is a stability within the client. In other words you can't bring this up if someone is really powerfully suffering and they just want to dwell on their marriage, or their girlfriend or their depression. In my opinion there has to be a certain stability factor first. Then you bring that up. So I am usually very patient about that and only bring it up if I feel somewhere inside of me that it is warranted.

If they buy into the concept and if it begins to take roots inside of them, it gives them a sense that not everything is hopeless. It gives them a sense that maybe the universe has a purpose and maybe there is some healing some essence out there that loves them and guides them, instead of being haphazardly pushed through life. Maybe it gives a sense of hope and a sense that all this isn't just some worthless game.

I have clients, I have a few clients that come by the center and read some of Baba's works and I have clients that talk about Yoganonda. We talk about all sorts of spiritual things. I would say at any given point there are about three or four people who are genuinely interested in some spiritual function or begin to get inquisitive. After we get to know each other we become a little bit more informal and a little bit more relaxed and sometimes I feel there is an openness there and we talk. Actually it's a great thing because it always cements a closer relationship.

Paul spoke about how he sees the therapeutic process.

Well I try to let the client know right off the bat that I am not the expert. I have some skills and some capabilities but basically we are all in the same boat

together and it is a role function more than you are coming in to see me for some profound knowledge and information.

And I try to let them know that in that process is a mutual experience and I am learning from them as much as they may be learning from the process that we are doing. So I try to talk more in abstract spiritual terms and really, I just want them to be comfortable and to be natural and settle down into the fact that we are doing this thing together. And I may be a bit of a guide and I'll take that role because I do have specific training and knowledge and expertise. They feel comfortable with that and I know what I am doing. I've done it for a long time and we do the best we can with it, whatever that may be.

What I learned from being a counselor is that someone may come in initially and I may not feel very connected with them and I may not like them. They may be boring or uninteresting. But I find that the more that I sit with them and talk with them and are open to who they are and what they present, I realize that issues change, feelings change, the connection deepens, call it love, or whatever. It opens us up to the uniqueness of everyone. The process that is involved in counseling is just opening oneself and allowing the wonderful essence to slip in. While initially you may have no connection. I think that's love.

I try to recognize that a) the ego is more complicated than I could ever possibly deal with and b) that there is no solution to much of anything. I try to recognize that we are all on a spiritual path to climb and I am on the same path

and we are learning from each other. So there is a mutual guide system approach, in terms of trying to support or help someone go forward or reduce the pain factor and have more insight into the awareness of themselves and maybe they can reach out a little bit more and get something that has more meaning than just what we struggle with each and every day.

First one has to identify the issues and that takes a while because most of our issues I think are really family of origin in design. I think we stimulate our own problems for as many years as we are on this earth. So then I think once you get the sense of what you are dealing with, you have to get some of that anger out.

Then I think you have to work towards using some discipline to make things better. I think understanding without discipline is pretty worthless. I think once you incorporate some discipline then you can start moving forward and hopefully start healing and feeling better about yourself and feeling more acceptance of yourself.

As I work with couples, I say, "Look we are going about this process of changing yourself not the other person. This has nothing to do with the other person. The process of marital family therapy is changing one's self and extending it to the family process. We are going to figure out how come it is so tough for you to do that. What stops you from understanding what is going on with the other person and what allows you to continue to absorb yourself in your own issues. And that's even if you if he's beating the crap out of you. That's a tough problem and I deal with that often. But my issue there is, "hey what are you

doing to allow this to happen to you.”

“What’s going on inside of you that this process hooks you and you stay in it and you support it and you become co-dependent. Let’s look at that. Let’s see what is going on there and then look at it truly spiritually, what is in the best interest of you and this person you say you love who is beating you up. Maybe it is in his best interest that he needs to go to jail.” So, you know, I just look at it from that type of perspective.

I think the process of therapy is the process of working to get some spiritual understanding of your self and some discipline to do something about it.

Paul also spoke about the limitations of therapy.

There’s got to be some way to get out of this cesspool. Unfortunately, I think therapy has a lot of limitations. I think we have a tendency to swim in that cesspool for long periods of time even though I believe in long term processes, I also believe we can take a shortcut and get a ladder to get out of that cesspool. I think a spiritual function is one of the ways we can do that. It seems to work for people.

I think Mani [Meher Baba’s sister.] told me once, therapy is just a shadow of the real world. As a therapist, I think my primary function is to guide and help someone ease the pain, and give the opportunity to talk about some of these horribly difficult painful things. But I am not under the impression that I can heal them or forever going to totally resolve these issues. I don’t believe they are resolvable. I don’t believe much of life is resolvable except by the grace of God.

I think what we have to do is do the best we can to work diligently to try to work forward. I really think we are very naive to think that therapy can deal with the complexity of the ego. I just don't think that is true. I feel therapy is more of a supportive healing function than a solving function.

At the same time, Paul also clearly felt that psychotherapy was an important factor in people's lives.

If you have ever been in terrible pain or severe pain and your heart is broken, it is so nice, it is so critical to have someone to talk to who understands your pain. I think that is really very powerful and I think that is a spiritual healing process. Then if you feel the person cares about you and wants to help you and give you support to guide you through some of that pain, I mean what's more important in life than that. I think we have to see ourselves as people that can help each other and can have objectivity but also can have friendship in that objectivity.

I think you have to like the people you are working with and they have to feel that you like them and are closer to them. This whole professional thing I think is a little bit outrageous. Then you can guide them a little bit with a little bit of knowledge or expertise or capability and work together so maybe they don't have to suffer so much.

First of all I truly believe that we can't assess, it is beyond us to assess basically what we are doing. We may think we are doing some great work and we are actually doing some crappy work. I've this guy I've been working with three

times a week for two years and he is very borderline, he is very explosive, he has a chemical dependency problem and he is very threatening. I wonder what I have done, if anything in two years. But I also feel he evidently wants to come in and the fact that he is alive, that's a great thing, meaning he could easily be dead. I mean he plays with guns, he has threatened himself. So, you know, it is hard for me to understand what we are accomplishing in many degrees. As long as I feel like there is something productive going on, I will continue the process. Very infrequently, I had one case of someone I saw for many years and I just felt that there was no movement and things were not getting better and I just felt in my heart it had to stop and I stopped it. So it is kind of an intuitive thing.

Paul commented about what he does when there are times when he feels like he doesn't have a good match with somebody.

Well, what I do there is I struggle with myself. Now, if it is too much for me to deal with and I do feel like I just can't be with this person then I will refer them to someone else. But most of the time I will look inside of myself and see what bothers them about me and then I will try again to get to know them and discover some things that act as a bridge. Sometimes there's people you just don't want to work with.

As 30% to 40% of his practice is made up of couples therapy, Paul elaborated on this aspect of his work.

I only see couples after I see them individually first. Because I don't

believe in couple therapy. I think it is mostly superficial and I think you have a tendency to get struck. I am not a great believer in marital therapy in and of itself.

So what I do is I usually break people up and I do individual work first and that gives me the foundation and gives them a foundation. Then eventually I will bring them in as a couple, but I will mix couple work with individual work, because a lot of this change process is individual design.

I very rarely bring a couple in and start the process in connection with the couple. I've tried it over the years and it is not as effective as doing individual work first and then bring in the couple.

I asked Paul how he feels his therapeutic practice has influenced his spiritual life over the years?

Well it forces me to look at myself all the time, because I see my liabilities and my limitations and my selfishness. It makes me look at who I am and all the crap I have in my brain. So then maybe I will change a little bit, get a little bit better, a little more discipline, not to be such a jerk. I'm not very naturally giving. I feel like I know how to play the role real well.

I asked him to talk about "the degree to which the understanding and wisdom you have gained over the years as a practitioner is the result of natural accumulation of life's wisdom gained from a normal maturation or is it really spiritual in nature. Is it possible to distinguish between the two?"

Well, yeah, you know I don't live in the spiritual realm most of the time.

Most of the time I am caught up with who I am and my limitations and my anger, my annoyances, my frustrations.

As I live in that reality I gain knowledge and experience and capability.

So that is where I am at that point. So I think there is a truth to that. Yet, behind all that truth I know I am nothing without my spiritual orientation.

And I recognize that change factors come from spiritual essence not from ego orientation. So I just try to get to that point as much as I can knowing that I fail 80 - 90 percent of the time.

Lilly

Lilly is a female Caucasian, fifty years old. She received her undergraduate degree in religious studies from an American university, and her master's degree in counseling from another American university. She has been practicing psychotherapy on and off for over twenty five years and currently works as a counselor in a university setting. Lilly has been following Meher Baba for twenty-seven years.

I knew Lilly casually in the early 1970's, and have seen her occasionally over the years during my visits to Meher Center. I interviewed Lilly on two occasions, mid October of 1999, and again in December of 1999.

As with Paul, I met with Lilly on Meher Center at a secluded spot for both interviews. She was very open, garrulous and articulate. She free associated easily as she addressed the question I put to her. As usual, I began our first conversation a little tense with concern that I would be able to glean the information I needed. Shortly into the session, I felt totally at ease and assured that we were on same wave length.

Lilly's Spiritual Life

I began by asking Lilly how she entered into her spiritual life.

I was a real miserable adolescent, real miserable and in high school we read the Book of Job. I don't remember what grade it was. I think it may have been 10th or 11th. What I got from that was how God abandons us. That's what I remember, God was arbitrary and played games. This God came down, played this game, created this world, had the miserable quality of competitiveness with

Satan or arrogance or something, you know and took it out on poor schmucky Job and then left him. Big deal that he got a new wife and more cattle. I became an agnostic. I accepted that God made the Universe. I was raised Jewish so I had a very impersonal concept about God. Bearded man up in heaven, I think that was a childhood kind of thing, a vision. Anyway, two things that happened: one, and I don't remember when it was. I think I was like 16, I went over to my very best friend's house, she lived three doors down. I was at her house like every other day so this wasn't unusual. But one day I walked into her house and went up to her bedroom where we used to sit and talk, and there was a picture on the wall and I asked her who that was and she said, "God." I said "Oh." That was the first and last time I ever saw that picture on her wall, or remember seeing her with that picture. I have no idea how long it had been up before I saw it or how long it was up after I noticed it that day. But I thought to myself, okay. God, that's nice.

So I go to school [college], I am very caught up in the drug culture and all that kind of stuff. I was real involved with this guy, I was madly desperately in love. We had been going together for almost two years and the second part of my sophomore year, we broke up. It wasn't my desire to do that, it was his and it was so devastating to me that I left school early. I couldn't sleep, I was just crying for days on end and it was just absolutely devastating. I just couldn't pull myself together enough to finish the school year so I left with a couple of incompletes and negotiated some grades just to get the hell out of there.

Below, Lilly speaks about her coming to follow Meher Baba.

I went home and I lay in bed and slept and cried and heard my parents try to figure out what to do about me. Well, anyway, fortunately my best friend was at home. It was right around my birthday and she took me out for my birthday, 1970, with a bunch of friends. I don't know who anybody else was, but there was a guy there that was very charming, fun, and spent the entire evening talking about Meher Baba.

Anyway, that was a turning point for me. Baba got me. I kind of feel like I was a butterfly caught in his net and I thank God. Over the years, I dabbled with drugs some more and ended up just having these awful experiences because I knew I shouldn't be doing it, truly God-awful experiences on drugs. I remember the first book I read. I bought this book *Everything And The Nothing* which is very cognitively oriented.

What I wanted and what I got was purpose. Purpose to the universe and purpose for being in the universe. I never had that before: knowing about reincarnation and evolution and involution and what our journey is for. That's why the Book of Job was so vivid for me. The purpose in the whole universe, the purpose in why people suffered, wasn't in it. In fact, what I recall is many, many years ago, I think I was just a kid, maybe 7 or 8 or something like that. I remember asking my Mom something like, how this could be the only life, you know, if God makes babies die; some questions like that, ones parents always dread. My mother answered very simply that this is because of evolution. This is a woman who grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and she wasn't, isn't real

main stream. She came out with “evolution.” I remember that. It made sense to me, but it wasn’t part of anything I grew up in; i.e., the Temple or anything.

Baba’s whole system, whole cosmology, just made so much sense to me. Over the years Baba’s cosmology still makes more sense to me than anybody else’s does.

Following is Lilly’s explanation of how she sees her relationship with Meher Baba.

So that was kind of a peace for me. Over time Baba became my father. It really has been a long time and I am not sure that didn’t kind of happen immediately, but I don’t remember, what I remember is that over time I just recognized more and more Baba as a loving presence in the universe that cared about me. When you don’t come from a tradition that has a personal God.

It may not seem like a big deal to you, but Judaism doesn’t have a personal God. It promotes faith in a loving presence in the universe that wants you to enjoy: that’s the best of Judaism. However, the down side is you don’t see or learn an image to talk to, or relate to. There aren’t the Eruch’s [older disciple of Meher Baba] and the Jane’s [older disciple of Meher Baba] and the Kitty’s [older disciple of Meher Baba] of the world to help interpret one’s experiences through their own.

Lilly also spoke about the role that Meher Center played in her spiritual life.

I’ve been coming to the Center since 1970. In fact, my first time in the Center in Myrtle Beach was with the boyfriend that I just adored. When I came

back after that summer where I found out about Baba, and I was caught in Baba's net.

I met Elizabeth [early Western disciple of Meher Baba's, who helped found the center in South Carolina] my first visit. What I remember about Elizabeth is that she scared the crap out of me. Her authority and her presence was fearsome. It was fearsome. And now in retrospect, I understand, I respect her, I certainly did, ever though I was always frightened by her. She was just so powerful. That's what I remember. And Jane was Mother Earth. Jane was the Mother, the nurturing mother I'd never had. One of her embraces, I got mothered. She was my mother substitute. So, that was that trip and the rest of the trips I really don't remember all that clearly. I do remember coming to the Center it was in about 1975 or 1976 and Kitty gave me a ride in one of those little go-carts. She said to me something like "haven't you been to India yet?" I said "no Kitty I have absolutely no desire to go." And her saying, "well you must go." And I'm going, "yeah, yeah, okay. Yes ma'am." Within a short period of time, I had to go.

I know that she was like seeing the future or planting the seed or something. I never could understand why anybody would want to go to India. Couldn't understand people bowing at chairs; it all seemed a bit peculiar to me. Then I spent the next year and a half doing whatever I could to save money to go to India. I worked an extra job, whatever I needed to do. It was a burning, it was a burning wanting to go. So I went. I went with [person's name].

Lilly experiences in India had a deep impact upon her spiritual life.

And actually it was a wonderful trip there. I don't remember much about the Mandali [older close disciples of Meher Baba], I remember going up to the tomb every single day and just crying endlessly. You could sit in the tomb then. Nannacar [male disciple of Meher Baba's who took care of his tomb in India] the caretaker, and my crying started with the first hug he gave me and maybe ended several hours later. I would just sit in the tomb and be hysterical for hours.

I think they were a cleansing [the tears]. Because I had said something to Eruch oh the tears of joy and he said well, are they, are they cool tears, tears of joy were cool. I realized that they weren't, they were very hot. I think it was a real cleansing. I knew who God is.

I did take another trip to the India. I spent a lot of time with the mandali and had a wonderful time. I remember Rano really well, and Bal Natu and just wonderful moments with the mandali. The first was all about the tomb, the second was mostly about the mandali.

[The mandali gave her] Their time and their energy, and I got to know the people. Moments of them as people and so they weren't big and frightening and distant. They were people I could relate to that had their own wisdom and had their own personalities. Yeah, yeah, and they had quirks. That was good for me to see, that demystified them on that level. Baba kept them as real people even with their spiritual stuff, they have prejudices, they have tempers, they have this and that and so it was wonderful for me to see that healthy ego. They were healthy people with their own personalities.

Lilly referred to Meher Baba as a loving presence in the universe, and spoke about the importance of love in her spiritual life.

It is all. It's all of it - it's everything. I mean he is as near to me as my own heartbeat. That he loves me more than I can ever love myself. I absolutely know that to be true. Sometimes I experience it, but I always know it, always. It's the anchor to my being. An absolute anchor to my being. It is why, through horrible times, I plod ahead. It is why, through the wonderful times, I plod ahead. Hahaha. Or drift ahead. It's why I get up every day; it's why I do everything that I do because I know that God made this universe and that each one of us gets to come to him. I don't understand what that means and I don't care what it means, I just know he absolutely loves me. I am beginning to allow myself to feel it more unconditionally. The conditions, I guess are part of our culture or ego.

She recounted a time when she had doubts about her relationship with Meher Baba.

So I started wondering if Baba was really God. Then, okay my next image is talking to Adi [older disciple of Meher Baba's]. I remember going to Adi for audience and he asked me what did I want to ask. What I asked him was basically how do I know if Baba is God?' And he said, "do you love Baba." I said, " yes." Then he said, "that's all that matters, next."

That was my answer. That just clarified everything for me. It didn't matter. All that mattered was the love. And then of course because it didn't matter anymore, I had no doubts. I knew when I went to the tomb that that was

the center of the universe. I have no doubt that Baba is the Om point or whatever that is absolutely the center of the universe.

She mentioned several times about being “caught in Baba’s net.”

It is just a very strong image of myself as a butterfly being chased by Baba. Very playfully being chased. Like I know that I really want to be caught by this person and that he would take wonderful care of me. And it is like playing peek-a-boo. Like that kind of feeling when you are a child and you are playing peek-a-boo. You think you are not being seen because you cover your eyes. That kind of feeling. It is a very joyful, wonderful feeling of being caught in the net.

Lilly spent a great deal of time talking about the importance of being healthy in her spiritual life.

I know here that I don’t need to be anything other than who I am and that Baba wants me to be healthy. I knew that kind of right away.

If I was going to give something to God, it was going to be something that was healthy and good and worth giving. So I worked really hard, a lot of therapy to have a healthy ego and a healthy personality. I think that, this very much related to my work. Because I see having a healthy ego as a real important part of the spiritual path. I don’t think the spiritual path is giving everything to God and giving him responsibilities and taking that responsibility yourself.

The spiritual path is being healthy and contributing and taking care of my obligations and duties and responsibilities. I see that as serving God best, for me and for most people I know. Everyone has a different path though. Anyway, the

1980's were about being here in Myrtle Beach and working and being married.

And again I think Baba has done a couple of things to me to break my attachment and it works for a while. My first marriage, which you will remember and I won't talk about it. It was very brief and very humbling, real humiliating, and that helped me break a lot of my pride. It was such humiliation, it was such public humiliation and it really broke away of pride about my judgment and being real together. That just wiped it out.

What follows is Lilly's explanation of what it means to her to follow Meher Baba, including the devotional aspects of her life.

You know, I always mean to and I think it is wonderful. People have these altars and they pray, and say arti [prayers and singing], and I have such God envy, and I know that they are more spiritual than me with Baba, and I can't do it. I am this little Jewish girl that grew up in a rather sacrilegious home that has the best intentions.

I do remember Baba as often as I can during the day. Never at a particular time and I hope that, you know the thing about "remember me at your last," that's the thing I hope for the most. I always feel less than my friends that do the prayers and some of them that do the arti. I can't remember anything in Persian, I can't remember the Master's prayer, I have to have it in front of me. My memory sucks and this is the way I am.

You know, I talk to him as if he were sitting next to me. I get angry with him, I can be quite pissed at Baba, but it is a real personal relationship. It is the

unconditionally loving in the fatherly sense and it is a very personal friendship. I get real pissed at him and I still know he loves me. I won't talk to him for a long time and I let him know I am not talking to him and I am pissed.. He is my constant companion when I make him that. I do it as much as I can do it. If it comes more over time.

Yes [I go to Meher Center]. Again this is one of these things that is on and off.

[Service] is what I do for a living. It's been what I did in my personal life too.

Also I was [in the recent past] working on learning how to forgive, I was furiously working on it, not only because I needed to do it on this level but also after my father died in 1993. I realized I had a lot of resentment and pain with my mom to let go of. I didn't like her. She wasn't a healthy mother. I didn't want her to pass away without me having forgiveness with her on some level. So I was doing major therapeutic work on myself and praying daily and listening to forgiveness tapes and all that kind of stuff. It had a generalized effect.

Lilly's Therapeutic Practice

Lilly talked about her professional training, including any theories or models that have been important in her professional development.

I was attending a university in [city name] and completed all but one course in sociology, I didn't like the psych department there at all. I was a sociology major and then it was the sixties, early seventies and I switched over to

religion my senior year and completed that. But I always had the intention of being in the psychology field. I didn't have a clue how I was going to sell my degree in comparative religion to anybody that hired. Well, [name] Mental Health Institute was looking for a tech level, which was an entry level with a bachelor's degree.

I ended up [later on] working midnight shift at the closed psychiatric ward at [name] Hospital which was bizarre in and of itself, seeing people get electric shock and seeing different things than I had seen at [name] Mental Health.

I just scurried on over to [university name] and started a new and innovative program in community mental health. It was more administrative but there was the consultation components and group therapy types of components but it wasn't geared clinically.

I got two job offers. And both with methadone clinics and I took the one at [name], it was a teaching hospital and I really wanted to be there. Yeah, that was a wild place. I got fabulous training there. That was such an extraordinary teaching hospital. It was the only methadone clinic in a five county area that treated the psychiatrically disturbed people with medical problems, pregnant women, and different kinds out of the norm drug addicts.

So I saw things that people don't see these days. I saw people in DTs, people hallucinating and I can remember two people that I was very fond of that died from withdrawal from alcohol. Things you don't see these days unless maybe if you worked in a skid row clinic or something. The [name] Clinic was a

great training ground for alcohol treatment and [hospital name] was an incredible training ground for drug addiction and psychiatric problems.

We went on rounds with the top psychiatrists there and that was just incredible and my boss was really very bright and very funny and taught me a great deal. I learned from experience, that's mainly how. I went to workshops, I went to great workshops and all those kind of trainings. Probably I learned more in four years at [hospital name] that I ever learned before or since.

I could smell some psychiatric disorders from a mile away from working there. I don't have the kind of clinical training that some other people have, but I know how to talk to drug addicts and alcoholics. I have to do a lot of catch up in terms of pharmaceuticals and neuroscience, however. I know when someone is dually diagnosed, I know some things that are just becoming a big thing, and we dealt with that 20 years ago.

Then I went to [name] to Mental Health, in 1979, 1980. Moved there in 1979. I moved here because I had gotten a job with Mental Health and started in January of 1980 and was there for six years. I saw a lot of family dysfunction, this area's so laden with dysfunction.

Lilly speaks below about her work as a counselor at a college.

Probably 90% clinical. Just a lot of supportive stuff, developmental, normalizing behaviors, I came from pathology viewpoint. I switched around. I still know it when I see it, but the reality is for the most part it is real normal developmental issues about confusion, separation anxiety, career choices, relationship stuff.. A lot of students bring

very severe issues with them to college. Like all of us, whatever we thought we were leaving behind, we don't leave it behind we bring it with us internally. The reality is that most of the kids that make it to college probably are the family heroes so they have the most going for them.

We do referrals for medication, usually for depression when needed. Have to hook them up with doctors in the community. I'm the identified one. I do probably seventy-five percent that is clinical, and the other twenty five is educational. And I do educational groups, discipline groups for kids that have been caught in the Resident Hall with alcohol violations. The groups, if it's the first time. If they have poor judgement or have a problem with alcohol and they keep getting caught they're sent to me individually. Any drug offense gets sent to me eventually. Because I try to be humorous, and non-judgmental in these groups, kids who actually have problems will seek me out afterward. I do see a good many kids on probation for DUI's or some other legal problem. I get calls before kids come to school about more serious offenses and I make decisions about involving other agencies in town. Most of the other problems are about relationships and anxiety and depression and getting through school, you know really normal 18 to 25 year old kind of stuff.

Lilly spoke about any therapeutic writing and techniques she is interested in now.

Yeah, I love Jung, and that's something that's probably new in the past six or seven years and that's come out of my trip to Hawaii. That kind of dream time thinking is very appealing to me.

Then about four years ago I did some extensive training in psychotherapeutic hypnosis and that just put me more and more in touch with what the unconscious does for us, and how it just plays a part in our everyday life and that kind of wiped away a lot of obstacles for me.

I operate more and more in terms of how people can empower themselves rather than interpretations from the outside. I hope I help people more from the inside out, chose from the inside out. I am real supportive. I can also be very direct with people with issues about alcohol and drugs. I am directive and assertive and confrontive with the bullshit. I don't waste my time in things like that anymore. Doing the hypnosis training changed my whole perspective. I do [currently use hypnosis]. But it is modified.

When I do class presentations on relaxation, one of the things I ask them to look at is how they feel physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. So, I really do find a way to weave that in and I have yet to have anybody say that they found that offensive even if they considered themselves an atheist or whatever. I mean everyone has a spiritual side.

I like to talk about integrity and that to me is about spirituality in an authentic and mundane kind of way. Like if you were a guy telling me about cheating on your girlfriend, I would question how you would define integrity to

yourself, and help you put together the pieces of how you feel and what you know and how you were raised and what you want for yourself. I think that talking about spirituality in a way that is palatable and functional.

Lilly addressed how she sees her work as service to God.

Like any other Baba lover who is a therapist knows that Baba's motto is 'Mastery in the Servitude', I see my work as service. I mean, this is how I serve.

Following are comments Lilly made about how following Meher Baba has helped her change her attitude and approach to life and people.

I changed around for Baba. Part of it was depression, but I was whiny, I was sarcastic. This was my personality for a long time. It was not cheerful, it was: "so what, drop dead, I'm miserable." My faith in Baba led me to change this, to be cheerful no matter what and to watch how that transformed the kinds of responses I got. Also, after how being cheerful lead me to have a different kind of outlook. I know that sounds real Mickey Mouse, but it is not. I don't care how superficial anybody thinks that is, it is really not. It is life changing.

It has changed my life. People tell me at work, my secretary that I have worked with for years and years, she says to me, how do you manage, you are always so cheerful? That's a gift. That's my gift from Baba. It is not what I started out to be in this lifetime.

I am not this glorious person. It's simply that I genuinely like most people and can find something likable or lovable about most people. Some people I can't and some it is just not, there is something that doesn't click. Most people I have

genuine affection for, though.

I've gotten so much less judgmental over time.

I think for me I have been so self-critical over the years that I have criticized in others what I have been critical of in myself. What I have noticed over time is that a) I've no right to do that and b) getting less critical of myself has opened me up to be less critical of others. That's how it has worked for me.

How much, I asked, "of that sort of process of letting go do you think is the result of as you were just saying natural maturation and how much would you say is the result of the spiritual life or can you say?"

I would love to think I've grown so much spiritually that I am just maturing and that I'm going to a new level on the spiritual plane. However, I doubt that. Hahaha, I think it is probably maturation and doing some very serious inner work and praying a lot. If it is spiritual, it is a gift I've been given. Some of it's volitional, but I think it is a lot maturation and answers to some prayers.

Finally, I asked, "how do you think your therapeutic practice has affected your spiritual life?"

I get much more out of it than they do. I know that. It really serves my soul and who I am, and what I think is living in the world, I'm so lucky to be able to do what I do for a living. I am grateful for that all the time. I am really grateful.

I just don't feel like anything is happening in therapy that isn't Baba

working. I try to remember that. I try not to take myself very seriously. I am healthy enough to know that this is all a gift. Every moment is a gift, every breath is a gift. When I remember that, it comes to me.

Summary

As I read and reread the text of the participants interviews, I began to notice repeating ideas and patterns emerging from their words. In the discussions about their spiritual lives, they all talked about the importance of love for God, companionship and remembrance of the master, traveling to India and Meher Center, and service to God, to name a few of the major patterns. Likewise, when discussing their therapeutic practice, they spoke about their formal training, the importance of spirituality in therapy, the impact of their spiritual life on the therapeutic process as well as the impact of their work on their spiritual lives. Chapter five is devoted to fleshing out these patterns and identifying the major themes and categories found in the interviews.

CHAPTER FIVE

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Introduction

Presented in this chapter is an analysis of data gathered from interviews with three therapists who identify themselves as transpersonal psychotherapists, and who also identify themselves as following the spiritual path outlined by the 20th century spiritual figure Meher Baba. The interviews were focused on a) how each therapist described the experiences of their spiritual life and b) how each therapist described their therapeutic practice, with a focus on how their spiritual life impacts their practice. Each therapist has had at least twenty-five years of professional psychotherapeutic practice, which has given them a broad experiential base from which to draw professional insights. Additionally, each participant has also been a follower of Meher Baba for over twenty-five years, assuring that they are familiar with and practice some aspects of bhakti and karma yoga.

As mentioned previously, the purpose of the qualitative design is to gain an understanding of the meanings an interviewee gives to their life experiences. “Technically, the qualitative research interview is semi-structured, and is neither an open conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire. It is conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes and that may include suggested questions” (Kvale, 1996, p. 27). As such, I used interview protocols to help facilitate these sessions, keeping in mind the importance of balance between structure and openness during the conversations.

This study utilize the constant comparative method in analyzing the data (Gall, Gorg & Gall, 1996), which refers to the

continual process of comparing segments within and across categories.

The term ‘constant’ highlights the fact that the process of comparison and revision of categories is repeated until satisfactory closure is achieved. Using constant comparison, the researcher clarifies the meaning of each category, creates sharp distinctions between categories, and decides which categories are most important to the study. (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996, p. 566)

In this study, I began by employing a within-case analysis of Sam, identifying the patterns and themes both in his spiritual life and in his therapeutic practice. I then moved to Paul and repeated the process, noting any additional themes that arose and revising the themes as needed. And finally, the process was duplicated with Lilly. In other words, I began by first using within-case analysis followed by a thematic analysis across cases, or cross-case analysis (Creswell, 1998).

In the organization of this chapter, I first present Sam’s themes, then Paul’s and then Lilly’s. In this regard, analytical charts outlining the themes are used to introduce each section. It should be remembered that the examples given both in the charts and articulated in the analysis of each section are indicative of the importance of the example to the overall meaning of what was articulated by each participant, and don’t necessarily reflect the number of times the example appeared in the text. As I moved from one participant to the next using the constant comparison method, comparing themes across

cases naturally occurred. The themes themselves are “analyst-constructed typologies” as opposed to those created in the language of the participants, or “indigenous typologies” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). With analyst-constructed typologies, “the researcher applies a typology to naturally occurring variations in observations” (pp. 114-115).

In analyzing the data, I use Carney’s (Miles & Huberman, 1994) method of analytical abstraction, where data sifting takes place through various levels. Level one involves creating a text from which to work (from tape-recorded interviews) and then trying out coding categories on data to help identify ideas and patterns. Level two is concerned with identifying major themes that emerge from the text. Level three focuses on reducing the bulk of the data to a manageable number of themes and then finally to a few overall categories. And level four is concerned with data interpretation, which for this study, is contained in chapter six.

All data was collected by tape recorder, later transcribed and given back to each participant to check its contents for accuracy and clarity. This process is called ‘member checking’, and is used to enable participants to confirm and further illuminate their remarks (Stake, 1995). Only minor alterations were made to the texts. Paul had no changes to make. Sam had only a few clarifications to make concerning names and places. Lilly made only minor editorial changes, and requested that the name of her undergraduate school not be given - to which I agreed. Additionally, as mentioned in Chapter Four, in order to maintain the anonymity of the participants, I have removed any reference – geographical or personal - that might lead to their identification.

It is the hope of this research that it may eventually lead toward developing

grounded theory concerning bhakti and karma practices of psychotherapists, and the influence such practices have on their professional work. Grounded theory induces constructs directly from collected data, as opposed to constructing theory in advance and subsequently testing it through data gathering and analysis (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996).

Thematic Analysis of Sam's Data

Sam's Spiritual Life Themes

I compiled these naturally occurring patterns into analyst-constructed typologies or themes. During this analysis of the text focused on Sam's spiritual life, four primary themes emerged : **a) Before Spiritual Life** - comments he made concerning his life before some transformative experience introduced him into his spiritual life; **b) Transformative Experience** - that event or those experiences which he identified as having signaled the beginning of his spiritual life; **c) Experience of Spiritual Life** - those ongoing experiences that mark the quality of his spiritual life; and, **d) Expressions of Devotion** - those outward or inward demonstrations or practices that are indicative of his spiritual life.

Table 1. Sam's Spiritual Life Themes

Before spiritual life	Transformative experience	Experience of spiritual life	Expressions of devotion
"I never had an interest in spirituality"	First hearing about Meher Baba	"Love is the essence"	Spiritual reading: "wonderfully refreshing"/like drinking pure water"
"I learned transcendental meditation"	Coming to Meher Baba: "my heart opened up"	"To find the humor"	"A gift when I go to the Center" (Meher Center)
	"This doesn't feel like a cult"	Ongoing inner dynamics: "secrets are shared, weaknesses are exposed, doubts are healed"	India: "magical, blissful"
		Reincarnation: "Its fundamental"	Meetings: "attendance is sparse"
		"Baba is right on dogma"	"I meditate"
		"Always a touch of grace"	"Constant companionship"/"power of his name"
		"Satsong: when around other spiritual aspirants there is a synergy of energies."	"Surrender is a life style"

Note. The phrases under each heading are quotes from the participant, while the thematic headings are analyst-constructed typologies.

Before Spiritual Life

The 'Before Spiritual Life' theme is made up of comments made by Sam that reflect on his life before the transformative experience that brought him into his current spiritual life. They point to a relative disinterest in spiritual or religious themes in his life. Examples of these comments are presented below.

- I never had an interest in spirituality. I joined the local church because my parents wanted me to. It didn't feel meaningful. Part of that is just adolescence, I am not sure people are ready for a connection with God at that early age.
- And back then in the early seventies I was atheist when I was at Duke for the first year, so it was like, I was reading Freud and I was reading philosophers, it was like God is a crutch and there is nothing here. It is just a giant cosmic explosion.
- Then in '74 it was Ground Hog's Day of '74, I learned transcendental meditation. I loved it. I loved the experience of it. I didn't necessarily like the organization, I loved the experience of meditation.

Transformative Experience

The 'Transformative Experience' theme is made up of comments made by Sam that describe the event of his coming to his spiritual life. Here, Sam begins to talk about the importance of his inner life and of living from the 'heart.'

- It made a little s curve there, just past the parking area and all the sudden my heart went “womp” and my heart opened up and I began to weep profusely, and I said to myself, I’m home, I’m home. It was real clear. It was absolutely laid out in my heart that I was truly home. I had searched all my life, even though I was only 21 years old, all my life for this one moment of being home. It was just exquisite.

That was August of 1974, I spent the whole day at the Center. My heart knew I was home. Never a question about that. My mind though is churning. I didn’t, I hadn’t experience spiritual experiences like this before so my mind is going what is this, but every question I had I got the answer.

- For the first time my life had become heart focused. And I began to figure things out differently.
- This doesn’t feel like a cult. My fear was that I was getting sucked into some kind of cult. Which was very prevalent then. A lot of cults that were bubbling up. But when I talked around the Center and met different people it wasn’t fakery, it wasn’t forced.

Experience of Spiritual Life

The ‘Experience of Spiritual Life’ theme is made up of comments made by Sam that reflect his ongoing experience of his spiritual life. These comments point to the dynamics of his inner life and the importance of his inner relationship with the master.

- It's [love] the essence of what it is about. The heart center, the approach to life. It feels most central. Everything else is just swirling dust.
- What the dynamic is is a couple of things. One is the power of his name. Which to me is part of the companionship. What this whole path is about, if you want to call it that, that sounds almost limiting, it is not that narrow. What it is about as I see it because I practice it is an ongoing companionship with this Lord, this Ancient One. Such that he becomes more intimate than any other relationship. In that intimacy secrets are shared, weakness are exposed, doubts are healed, all the psychological baggage historically I might have hidden is free to just be there. That sense of self-acceptance comes from that openness. So, there is a feeling of acceptance of whatever and in the process of that is a greater ability to love.
- When I am in my mind and not in companionship then it is noisier, it is confusing, less certainty, more judgmental, more cynical, critical, all those things that go with the mental energy. And yet, when I am in my companionship and my heart space, it is so much simpler because there is a feeling of whatever your doing it is okay.
- I am convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that Baba is always here for all of us, sustaining us. I mean, that is a conclusion I feel. But, we have to tune in. It is our job, to tune in - tune in as much as possible. Because

that is the mission here: finding God in this most dense form of life.

Find sublime in the shit.

- Because we are here to play. To find God. To find out the humor, hopefully. That was one of the ways I try to find God is through laughter.
- [Reincarnation] It's fundamental. It is truly fundamental. Especially as a psychotherapist. When I am sitting with people and I see them struggling and it is never ever made sense to me that there would only be one lifetime. Never ever.
- One of the things I love about Baba is that he was right on dogma.

Expressions of Devotion

The 'Expressions of Devotion' theme is made up of comments made by Sam that outline the ways in which he practices his spiritual life. He speaks about the importance of meditation, visiting place of spiritual significance, and surrenderance as central to his spiritual life.

- I didn't have any resistance to any of the books. I mean, when I read the discourses it was like, it was such a wonderful experience, it was like drinking pure water - after you have had this swamp water.
- Baba's gift to me when I go to the Center is that it slows down my mind another level.
- [Meher Baba's Tomb] is a wonderful spot. It feels like a generation station.

- I still do [meditate]. I use Baba's name for my mantra. Sometimes I fill in the old Sanskrit word or two but generally I use Baba's name and it takes a constant remembrance on my part.
- To me surrender is not an event but it is a life style. Giving it up whether it is an attachment, whether it is a psychological issue, whether it is a desire, whatever, it is about giving it up, letting it go.
- My attendance [to meetings] is sporadic. As I've grown older in Baba, I realize it is all right here. It is every moment. It doesn't have to be drive to [name of place]. It is every moment. God is available, love is available every single instant sustaining us. So there is no where to go. That is the essence of it.

Sam's Therapeutic Practice Themes

During analysis of the text focused on Sam's therapeutic practice, five primary themes emerged: a) **Formal Training** - or colleges attended and other professional training; b) **Type of Practice** - including types of clients; c) **Philosophy of Therapy** - how he articulated the underlying meaning of his approach with his clients; d) **Techniques** - which include the methods he used; and e) **Spiritual Dimensions of Therapist in Practice** - which are the statements Sam make about how his spiritual life is impacted by his professional life.

Table 2. Sam's Therapeutic Practice Themes

Formal Training	Type of Practice	Philosophy of Therapy	Techniques	Spiritual Dimensions of Therapist in Practice
Formal training: tradition psychology, systems, transpersonal/internship	Type of practice/clients: "acute psychological distress"	"Learning how to love"/"more room for love"	"Use humor"	"Keeping companionship"
	"Many people have addictions"	Focus of practice: "holistic psychotherapy"	Self-disclosure: "I need to keep my balance"	"Don't get attached to results"/"give that to Baba"
		"Spirituality is our most intimate part"	"Do their homework"	Work: "It's pure service"
		Limits of therapy: "I may not change the personality structure..."	"I teach meditation"	Spiritual growth vs. normal maturation
		Therapeutic relationship: "sense of trust, openness"	"Go home and read"	Practice influences life: "It is one in the same"
		"You are the expert on you"	"Need to do some service"	
		"Be real in here"		
		"Sense of family history"		
		"Times when solution focused is great"		

Note. The phrases under each heading are quotes from the participant, while the thematic headings are analyst-constructed typologies.

Formal Training

The 'Formal Training' theme is made up of comments made by Sam that outline his college and graduate school training. His training was made up of more traditional courses and practica associated with his degree (MSW).

- I got out of undergraduate school in psychology and economics. Then I worked two years at a treatment center for children and adolescents.
- I decided to go to [an MSW] program. They admitted nine students and six matriculated. So I had a graduate program of six people. The terminal masters program. You didn't get any summer vacations, it was two years straight. It was psychotherapy training.
- I never became a devotee of anybody, it is very common in training programs for somebody to latch on to a certain person.

Type of Practice

The 'Type of Practice' theme is made up of comments made by Sam that talk about the kinds of clients he has, and how he structures his practice. Sam's is in private practice, which tends to be made up of people who are depressed or suffering from some other sort of personal distress.

- So if you look at the quality of my clients. Generally, they are people who are in acute psychological distress but many times right under the surface or right at the surface is a spiritualness.

- It is primarily word of mouth. So wonderfully, the people who are drawn to me initially and do the work on their mind, body and spirit, are the ones who tell their friends and I have this ongoing flow of people very similar in makeup. You know some of them are depressed, some of them are anxious, some are hysterical. But it is kind of self-selecting. It is been a real blessing.
- Occasionally I see other therapists. I see 60% women, about 40% men. I do probably 80% of my work is individual work and then 20% couples, family. Basically, all income ranges. I don't work with the very poor. Although sometimes I do, but these are people who maybe had health insurance.

Philosophy of Therapy

The 'Philosophy of Therapy' theme is made up of comments made by Sam that point to the underlying outlook and meaning behind his approach to working with clients. He sees himself as a holistic practitioner, looking at all sides of a person's life. But most notably, Sam's overarching focus is on the spiritual dimension of his client's lives.

- What I find is that when you get people psychological help or stabilized, then there is more room for love. The divine self, the higher self begins to manifest. People will come in and say you know I'm feeling like my spiritual self is understood. After we start getting some basic healing in a psychological way.
- People need to learn how to love themselves.

- What I call my style is holistic psychotherapy. Because if someone comes in and says they are anxious and I don't ask about their caffeine use then I am not being a good therapist.
- I may not change the personality structure but I am going to a) make them more compassionate for their foibles and b) let the spirit flow through those things and do the healing of the spirit.
- But for many people, once you have a relationship, you have license to say whatever you need to say. For both parties. There is a sense of trust, there is a sense of openness.

Techniques

The 'Techniques' theme is made up of comments made by Sam about the methods he utilizes in his approach to clients. In addition to the more traditional techniques like talk therapy and bibliotherapy; Sam also adds some techniques that can be identified as more transpersonal in nature, such as meditation and service work.

- I teach meditation to probably 30% of my clients.
- Sometimes you get a sense of where people are spiritually and then you give them a book that will bump them to the next level.
- And to not forget that they too need to do some service. To get involved in something larger than themselves.

Spiritual Dimensions of Therapist in Practice

The 'Spiritual Dimensions of Therapist in Practice' theme is made up of comments made by Sam about what he experiences spiritually as he practices

professionally, that is, how he draws upon his spiritual side for his work, and how his spiritual life is impacted by his work. He views his profession as a service for humanity dedicated to his master. His focus before and during sessions is to look inwardly for the companionship of the master, and to surrender the results of his work to God.

- So I ask Baba for wisdom to know what to do, to know where to push, how hard to push or what not to say. [I do that through] Companionship.
- There are times when I will be moved to tears because there is so much grace in the room, it is just incredible.
- I can't get attached to the result. People say how do you sit in front of 30 people a week and they are miserable. How do you do that? And what I tell them is I say I don't get attached to the results.
- It is pure service. If I can get myself out of the way, look who's left. Because anything of spirit is central. I think we are here to find spirit.
- [spiritual growth vs. normal maturation] It is just life. Everything is inherently spiritual.
- One of the things I do when I come in the office in the morning, close my door and I do a centering. I say Baba come to this office and fill it with your divine light.

Summary of Sam's Themes

Sam's initial transformative experience at Meher Center can, I believe, be interpreted as a significant change in consciousness. It is at this point that he began to live more out of his heart and less out of his head. This defining shift in consciousness

became the central focus of his life, providing a framework or gauge against which he now measures everything he does, from his personal to his professional life. His life is now oriented in a more inward way, that is, he now seems to be looking for understanding and direction in his life from a source within himself. And the place where he looks he metaphorically describes as the heart – the origin of a kind of knowing different from logic or cognitive reasoning. The experience and focus of this knowing is love.

Love is a gift of grace from God, or in this case, a gift from his master, Meher Baba. In a very real sense, the inner focus of love and the inner relationship with the master are one and the same dynamic. Far from being a static relationship, this dynamic must be nurtured through remembrance and devotion if it is to grow. By engaging in inward remembrance of his master, Sam's psyche is now reoriented towards that relationship. By surrendering inwardly to the master, Sam's deepest innermost thoughts and feelings are held up to the light of this relationship, and he feels a great sense of openness, self-acceptance and freedom from doubts and fears. This inner dynamic also provides a basis for forming a sense of personal values, evidenced by the fact that he sees his work as a psychotherapist as a service to humanity for the master. In short, the master becomes the basis for the way Sam lives his life. Everything he does is judged by the criteria of his heart.

Devotion also plays an important part in his life. Different forms of devotion – which in one sense can be described as various ways of remembering God - help to enhance the inner life. Sam meditates, travels to Meher Center and India, and meets with

other followers of Meher Baba all to help nurture his spiritual relationship with the master. Gradually, according to the philosophy outlined by Meher Baba, these activities lead toward a greater transformation of consciousness, where the demands of the limited ego are transformed by love to a more selfless, open and loving consciousness.

What is particularly striking in Sam's description is the relative absence of more traditional outer forms of religious ritual. There are no mandatory prayers or meditations, nothing to join, no initiation into following Meher Baba, and no hierarchy of disciples to follow. One is left with focusing on and developing an inner spiritual life without outer benchmarks or a step by step plan of action. The focus is mainly on the inner relationship with the master which is unique to each individual.

Sam was trained professionally in ways that can be called more traditional in nature, with the addition of a transpersonal curriculum in psychosynthesis. What is most evident from his descriptions, I believe, is that he orients his practice from a transpersonal perspective. This takes place in the person of the therapist, as Vaughn (1979) suggests. It is the context set by the therapist that determines whether he or she is considered transpersonal. And Sam's therapeutic outlook is taking what he called a holistic approach, moving toward the spiritual dimensions of his client. By openly asking about and talking about religion and spirituality in his sessions, this encourages his clients to explore that side of their lives.

In keeping with his own spiritual focus and development, Sam believes that people have come to him in order to learn how to love, both themselves and others – and ideally to love God. And in the service of that work, while he may use more traditional

techniques of talk therapy and biblio-therapy, once a person is stabilized he also incorporates meditation, service work, and talking about the spirit as more direct transpersonal approaches. All of this can be seen as an extension of his own spiritual life, of what is ultimately most important and meaningful to him in his life. He practices what he preaches, and has great faith that others can benefit in the same ways he has.

Sam's therapeutic practice is a large part of his spiritual life, and as such, it has a direct effect on him spiritually. As mentioned above, his practice is a form of service to God, constituting an important form of outward devotion to his master. He allows the experiences he has with his clients to have an impact on his inner life: he is often moved by their work, and feels that he is in a partnership with them in their journey of inner growth. In addition, his practice also provides a constant challenge for Sam, as he tries to be alert to the possibility of getting too attached to the results of his work.

Thematic Analysis of Paul's Data

Paul's Spiritual Life Themes

During analysis of the text focused on Paul's spiritual life, five primary themes emerged. They were the same themes found with Sam, with the addition of 'Spiritual life Before Meher Baba. Paul's themes include: **a) Before Spiritual Life** - comments he made concerning his life before some transformative experience introduced him into his spiritual life; **b) Spiritual Life Before Meher Baba** - those experiences Paul identified as spiritual prior to his following Meher Baba; **c) Transformative Experience** - that event or those experiences which he identified as having signaled the beginning of his spiritual life; **d) Experience of Spiritual Life** - those ongoing experiences that describe the

Table 3. Paul's Spiritual Life Themes

Before spiritual life	Spiritual life before Meher Baba	Transformative experience	Experience of spiritual life	Expressions of devotion
"I was miserable"	Early spiritual interests/experiences	First hearing about Meher Baba	"Process of this love"	"I internally repeat Baba's name"
		Coming to Meher Baba: "love directly into my heart"	"Service...way of serving God"	"To surrender it"
			"The experience of Mehera was profound"	"Role of marriage has a spiritual purpose"
			"I have had dreams of Baba"	"Wanted to be close to the Center"
			Ongoing inner dynamics: "It's a lot of frustration"/"essence of struggle"	"Decided at that point to go to India"
			"Where I am only because of his grace"	
			"Baba does not give a lot of reinforcement"	
			"God orchestrated that"	

Note. The phrases under each heading are quotes from the participant, while the thematic headings are analyst-constructed typologies.

quality of his spiritual life; and, e) **Expressions of Devotion** - those outward or inward demonstrations or practices that are indicative of his spiritual life.

Before Spiritual Life

The 'Before Spiritual Life' theme is made up of comments made by Paul that reflect on his life before the transformative experience that brought him into his current spiritual life. While his childhood included some religious instruction, religion or spirituality played a small role in his upbringing.

- I grew up in a Jewish home, and went to Hebrew school from age six to thirteen, when I was barmitzvahed. After that I was home free. I never went to Temple.

There was really no religion practiced in our home - during the holidays we never did anything in the home.

- I graduated from college and I was teaching in Newark, New Jersey, 7th grade, and was miserable.

Spiritual Life Before Meher Baba

The 'Spiritual Life Before Meher Baba' theme is made up of comments made by Paul about spiritual experiences he had before he came to follow Meher Baba. Unlike the other therapists interviewed, Paul had an rich spiritual life before coming to follow Meher Baba, which included some intense and unusual experiences.

- Then in 1969 for a birthday present a lady by the name of Katherine McDowell gave me a book called "An Autobiography of a Yogi" by Paramahansa Yogananda. I read that. I graduated from college and I was teaching in Newark, New Jersey, 7th grade, and was miserable. I read

that and I decided this is it. This is the best thing since chocolate covered raisins.

- Well, one experience I had when I was in Kentucky I was living on a farm and I was doing my mediation. It was like my body, it was like I was dying. It became absolutely stiff, I couldn't move it and it started levitating off the bed. It levitated about six feet off the bed. It started rotating counter-clockwise. There was this power surge. I was very frightened, I was scared to death.
- I was doing this meditation and you know you can meditate for months and just not, it is very frustrating. And I was sitting there and all the sudden I heard these celestial sounds.

Transformative Experience

The 'Transformative Experience' theme is made up of comments made by Paul that describes the event of his coming to follow Meher Baba. His was a dramatic transformation that resulted in shedding his yoga practices and inwardly beginning to follow the path of Meher Baba. This transformation included not only the cessation of the experiences he had when practicing yoga, but more importantly, the beginning of experiencing that focus on the heart or on love.

- All night long I couldn't sleep and my mind was Meher Baba and Yogananda. The two words were going all night long. It was terrible. In the morning I woke up and it was like I said Meher Baba's name and I never did Yogananda after that. I felt that I had so much Yoga

impressions in my mind and I was so committed to this austere life, that I felt that entire night Baba had cleansed myself of those past impressions.

- So I went back about a week later and I was sitting in the tomb by myself and I had this incredible physical sensation, it wasn't an emotional sensation, it was physical, that my chest was opening up and that somebody or some process of this love. All I could say was like someone took this container of love and poured it directly into my heart. It wasn't emotional, it was physical. I felt the love just surging through my system, it connected right there. Then after that I felt that the doubts were gone and I just knew that this was where I was supposed to be.

Experience of Spiritual Life

The 'Experience of Spiritual Life' theme is made up of comments made by Paul that reflect his ongoing experience of his spiritual life. Included are his feelings of Meher Baba coming into his heart, his profound experience of being with Mehera (a close disciple of Meher Baba), how grateful he is to be following this path, but also how he sees the limitations in his life based upon his experience of love. He also articulates the lack of what he calls 'reinforcement' or outer religious/spiritual forms and expressions normally associated with more structured religions or cults.

- I felt that was Baba coming into the heart. I felt that was Baba saying you are mine now. You are in my family and the connection is made
- Well the role that it plays [love] is I am basically a failure.

- Yeah, that's the only value. I am not sure it's love. I always say the value to me. I am not an abstractualist. A value to me is getting close to the impersonal aspect of God.
- I think the experience with Mehera was profound. Just her presence was so magnificent and powerful and was very draining and tiresome but it wasn't that the emotion you felt was very pleasant but it was beyond being pleasant it was a powerful experience.
- I have had dreams of Baba being there.
- So I would say, you know, and I also feel a gratitude that for who I am and how I was raised and I have been a very fortunate person. I feel that comes directly from God's grace.
- So with Meher Baba over the years, there is less and less reinforcement and it forces me to go inward more. That's hard. You know I want somebody to give me something. No initiations, no rituals. There is no real formal process, so you are really pretty much, in my opinion, on your own traveling with your self.
- Yeah, I think I was given a road map.

Expressions of Devotion

The 'Expressions of Devotion' theme is made up of comments made by Paul that outline the ways in which he practices his spiritual life. These include an outer daily repetition of prayers, as well as the inner focus on surrendering to the master. Importantly, central to Paul's devotional life is his relationship with his wife.

- I say it repetitively, the Master's prayer and the prayer of repentance and the Beloved God prayer, from when I leave my house until I get to my office. So I do that every morning and then I have some beads that I have with me, that I repeat Baba's name when I am in session, see right here.
- Surrender to me means a sense of just giving up, letting go of peculiar self-centered selfish kind of things that come into my brain.
- Well, I think most important I married someone who follows Meher Baba and I think the essence of marriage is a struggle. It is a spiritual struggle to cleanse one's selfishness and self-centeredness.

Paul's Therapeutic Practice Themes

Analysis of the text focused on Paul's therapeutic practice, revealed the same five primary themes found in Sam's interviews: a) **Formal Training** - or colleges attended and other professional training; b) **Type of Practice** - including types of clients; c) **Philosophy of Therapy** - how he articulated the underlying meaning of his approach with his clients; d) **Techniques** - which include the methods he used; and e) **Spiritual Dimensions of Therapist in Practice** - which are the statements Paul make about how his spiritual life is impacted by his professional life.

Table 4. Paul's Therapeutic Practice Themes

Formal Training	Type of Practice	Philosophy of Therapy	Techniques	Spiritual Dimensions of Therapist in Practice
Formal Training: Rogers, Karkoff, Reality therapy, behavior modification, Gestalt, family therapy, Transactional Analysis	Type of Practice/clients: "I see a high level"	"Love...the uniqueness of everyone"	Limits of therapy: "No solution to much of anything"	"Practice...a spiritual service"/"what God wants me to do"
		"I use whatever works"	"I look at family of origin issues"	Practice influences life: "Practice...look at myself"
		"I don't believe in short-term therapy"	Self-disclosure: "I keep things close inside of myself unless there is a certain receptivity"	Spiritual growth vs. normal maturation
		Therapeutic relationship: "We are learning from each other"		
		"Spiritual function in every aspect of life"		
		"Stability with a client first"		
		Focus of practice: "Change comes from spiritual orientation"		
		"Life is resolvable by the grace of God"		

Note. The phrases under each heading are quotes from the participant, while the thematic headings are analyst-constructed typologies.

Formal Training

The 'Formal Training' theme is made up of comments made by Paul that outlines his college and graduate school training. Like Sam, Paul experienced fairly traditional modes of therapeutic training.

- Originally, I guess I was trained in the basic counseling stuff, Rogers, Karkoff and that was formal training. Then I received some training when I worked at the State Mental Hospital in Tallahassee, Florida as a behavioralist.
- I started some training Gestalt and I went for some training for some years in Gestalt and also transactional analysis, I became certified in that. And on and on and on.
- I did some work as a reality therapist with Glasser and a lot of family work, human origin material, things of that nature, simply I've had various training modalities and I am not particularly, I don't consider myself one or the other. I just use whatever works.

Type of Practice

The 'Type of Practice' theme is made up of comments made by Paul that talk about the kinds of clients he has, and how he structures his practice. Like Sam, Paul is also in private practice. His clients are mostly well educated professionals.

- I have been doing private work for the past 15-18, 19 years. I see a high level, high talent in terms of most everyone I see has at least college

education. Either they are professional people, high income bracket, very aware people, and individuals who are committed to doing some work. I do long term therapy, I do not do short term intervention. Most clients I see for a year, two years, minimum. On a weekly or biweekly basis.

Philosophy of Therapy

The ‘Philosophy of Therapy’ theme is made up of comments made by Paul that point to the underlying outlook and meaning behind his approach to working with clients. He draws upon his broad training and experience to chose whatever he feels is most appropriate with each client. Like Sam, the intention or consciousness behind how Paul works with clients is what is most important: he is always alert to the spiritual possibilities.

- I’ve had various training modalities and I don’t consider myself one or the other. I just use whatever works.
- Well, I think the foundation is that, I don’t think that there is anything that I would do that I didn’t relate to on some spiritual level because I don’t feel like there is any real purpose to be around other than that. So I try to recognize that a) the ego is more complicated than I could ever possibly deal with and b) that there is no solution to much of anything. I try to recognize that we are all on a spiritual path to climb and I am on the same path and we are learning from each other. So there is a mutual guide system approach.

- And I may be a bit of a guide and I'll take that role because I do have specific training and knowledge and expertise.
- I think your spiritual function is in every aspect of your life and so you know we just have to get down to the bottom line.
- And I recognize that and I know that in my opinion change factors come from spiritual essence not from ego orientation. So I just try to get to that point as much as I can knowing that I fail 88 - 98 percent of the time.
- I don't believe much of life is resolvable except by the grace of God.

Techniques

The 'Techniques' theme is made up of comments made by Paul about the methods he utilizes in his approach to clients, which tends to be more traditional 'talk oriented' therapy with a focus on first uncovering pathology then putting new systems in place. Like Sam, Paul sees his relationship with clients as more egalitarian, with therapist and client growing and learning together.

- Well, I think one has to identify the issues and that takes a while because most of our issues I think are really family of origin in design. I think we stimulate our own problems for as many years as we are on this earth.
- I think the next step forward on that road is to say okay now what am I capable of doing about some of these issues, which usually involves some discipline. Things don't gradually get better unless you put new systems into place and new systems mean going against some of our pathology, which takes discipline.

- I try to recognize that we are all on a spiritual path to climb and I am on the same path and we are learning from each other. So there is a mutual guide system approach.

Spiritual Dimensions of Therapist in Practice

The ‘Spiritual Dimensions of Therapist in Practice’ theme is made up of comments made by Paul about what he experiences spiritually as he practices professionally, that is, how he draws upon his spiritual side for his work, and how his spiritual life is impacted by his work. In this regard, Paul is clear in his feelings that, from a spiritual perspective, this is the work that he is supposed to be doing. Like Sam, Paul sees his practice as service for the master. As a part of his spiritual life, the experiences of his practice reflect back onto Paul his own personal ego limitations.

- The only thing to understand for me is evidently this is where I am supposed to be and spiritually I think this is what God wants me to do.
- Well it [my practice] forces me to look at myself all the time as I see myself, because I see my liabilities and my limitations and my selfishness. What it does for me it makes me look at who I am and all the crap I have in my brain.
- [spiritual growth vs. normal maturation] Well, yeah, you know I don’t live in the spiritual realm most of the time. Most of the time I am caught up with who I am and my limitations and my anger, my annoyances, my frustrations. As I live in that reality I gain knowledge and experience and capability. So that is where I am at that point. So I think there is a truth

to that. Yet, behind all that truth is I know I am nothing without my spiritual orientation.

Summary of Paul's Themes

When Paul came to follow Meher Baba, he already had a spiritual life rich in various and fantastic experiences. However, the quality of these experiences was quite different from what he came to feel from his transformation with Meher Baba. Like Sam, Paul talks about his heart opening up. This experience became a real shift in consciousness for Paul. His previous spiritual experiences were not focused on love but more on meditation, out of body experiences, and hearing unusual mystical sounds. Coming to follow Meher Baba reoriented his life in a completely different way, and that reorientation was a result of his experience of love.

Paul had a deep inner experience of love during his initial trip to India – that profound experience of something physically being poured into him. Again, like Sam, love, then, becomes the basis for how he measures his life. Love is experienced as a gift from the master, as this experience of love is intimately connected with Meher Baba. Meher Baba replaces Yogananda as the central figure in his spiritual life, and from that point on, becomes the basis upon which Paul who he is and the future decision he will make. His original transformative experience in Meher Baba's tomb establishes an inner relationship with the master. One way this manifests is that Paul is able to intuitively comprehend the road map of his life.

At the same time, Paul expresses the experiences of his spiritual life more in terms of his limitations than of a personal inner sense of freedom or joy. He often feels frustrated in his inner life, but realizes that this experience of his limited ego is part of his spiritual path. This is in contradistinction to Sam who tends to focus on more positive aspects of his spiritual experiences. I tend to view this as more of a matter of emphasis than of significant divergence in their separate experiences. I believe each of them would agree with the other in recognizing all sides of their spiritual lives. But either due to current life circumstances or an innate predilection, Paul appears to emphasize one side and Sam another.

Remembrance of the master also plays an important role in Paul's life. The act of remembering God appears to provide a basis in both Paul and Sam for keeping and further developing an inner relationship with the master. Repeating prayers dictated by Meher Baba, going to Meher Center (although less in later years) and traveling to India all represent devotional ways Paul uses to keep the sense of inner remembrance alive. Also central to Paul's spiritual life is his marriage. He clearly articulates the importance his marriage plays in helping him work on his ego limitations and focusing on surrendering to the master.

Also missing in Paul's inner life are the outer trappings normally associated with traditional devotional religious expressions. Paul talks openly about the lack of reinforcement in his spiritual life. I believe this to mean that he has no outer gauge to measure how he is progressing, no outer sense of

belonging to a organized spiritual group. Instead, he is forced to look inwardly to find the guidance and meaning he needs to sustain him in his spiritual life, hence the importance of remembrance.

Like Sam, Paul was trained very traditionally as a psychotherapist, but unlike Paul did not have any formal transpersonal training. At the same time, Paul exhibits the same quality as Sam of providing the context of transpersonal psychotherapy in the person of the therapist. He brings into the sessions a consciousness alert to spiritual or higher possibilities. Paul works less overtly on spiritual themes than Sam, due mainly I believe to the readiness of his clients. Nevertheless, he always has an eye on moving towards spiritual directions depending upon the receptivity of the person involved.

Striking to me are Paul's views of the limitations of ego therapy in bringing about lasting change in people. He believes that real change comes only from 'spiritual essence', which is ultimately made possible by the grace of God. This seems to be a natural conclusion based upon the quality and beliefs of his spiritual life. Again, like Sam, Paul's approach to counseling is that he is not the expert but that client and therapist are working together in a mutual guide approach. While Paul's techniques are not overtly transpersonal like Sam, using more traditional talk therapy in his therapeutic work, he is no less transpersonal in that he brings a spiritual context into the sessions.

Paul's professional life is a significant part of his spiritual life. His therapeutic practice is an expression of service to the master, and as such, is an

act of devotion. The effect of his practice on his inner life is that it helps him see himself, including all his limitations, in a more clear, albeit frustrating, light.

Thematic Analysis of Lilly's Data

Lilly's Spiritual Life Themes

In analysis of the text focused on Lilly's spiritual life, four primary themes emerged. They were the same themes found with Sam and Paul , but without the addition of "Spiritual life Before Meher Baba" theme found with Paul. Like Sam and Paul, Lilly's themes include: a) Before Spiritual Life - comments she made concerning her life before some transformative experience introduced her into her spiritual life; b) Transformative Experience - that event or those experiences which she identified as having signaled the beginning of her spiritual life; c) Experience of Spiritual Life - those ongoing experiences that describe the quality of her spiritual life; and, d) Expressions of Devotion - those outward or inward demonstrations or practices that are indicative of her spiritual life.

Table 5. Lilly's Spiritual Life Themes

Before spiritual life	Transformative experience	Experience of spiritual life	Expressions of devotion
"God was arbitrary"	First hearing about Meher Baba	"Love...it is all"	"Service...mastery in servitude"
"Broke up with a guy, it was devastating"/"caught up in drug culture"	Coming to Meher Baba: "Baba got me"/"caught in his net"/"Baba became my father"	"Purpose to the universe"	"I do remember Baba"
		"Doubt if Baba was the Avatar"	"The spiritual path is giving everything to Baba"
		"I am pissed at him"	"Reading a lot of books"
		"Helped me break a lot of pride"	"Meher Center...where I found out"
			"Wonderful moments with the mandali"
			"India...wonderful experiences"
			Ongoing inner dynamics: "Baba wants me to be healthy"
			"Take care of duties"
			"Prayers...I can't do it"

Note. The phrases under each heading are quotes from the participant, while the thematic headings are analyst-constructed typologies.

Table 5. (continued)

Before spiritual life	Transformative experience	Experience of spiritual life	Expressions of devotion
			Meetings: "one of those things that is on and off"
			"I don't have to like everyone, but I do have to love everyone"
			Importance of marriage: "my commitment to serve as a caretaker certainly has to do with Baba"
			"Joyful...God wants for us"
			"Baba has taught me how to forgive"

Note. The phrases under each heading are quotes from the participant, while the thematic headings are analyst-constructed typologies.

Before Spiritual Life

The ‘Before Spiritual Life’ theme is made up of comments made by Lilly that reflect on her life before the transformative experience that brought her into her current spiritual life. Examples of these comments are presented below. Like Sam and Paul, religion/spirituality seemed to be mostly absent from Lilly’s childhood.

- I was a real miserable adolescent, real miserable and in high school we read the Book of Job. I don’t remember what grade it was. I think it may have been 10th or 11th. What I got from that was how God abandons us. That’s what I remember, God was arbitrary and played games.
- It may not seem like a big deal to you, but Judaism doesn’t have a personal God. It promotes faith in a loving presence in the universe that wants you to enjoy: that’s the best of Judaism. However, the down side is you don’t see or learn an image to talk to, or relate to.

Transformative Experience

The ‘Transformative Experience’ theme is made up of comments made by Lilly that describes the event of her coming to follow Meher Baba. Like Sam and Paul, something happened to Lilly that completely changed her life. She talked about this event as being ‘caught in Baba’s net’, and comes to talk about the experience as Meher Baba becoming her father, a loving and caring presence in the universe.

- I went home and I lay in bed and slept and cried and heard my parents try to figure out what to do about me. Well, anyway, fortunately my best

friend was at home. It was right around my birthday and she took me out for my birthday, 1970, with a bunch of friends. I don't know who anybody else was, but there was a guy there that was very charming, fun, and spent the entire evening talking about Meher Baba. Anyway, that was a turning point for me. Baba got me. I kind of feel like I was a butterfly caught in his net and I thank God.

- Over time Baba became my father. It really has been a long time and I am not sure that didn't kind of happen immediately, but I don't remember, what I remember is that over time I just recognized more and more Baba as a loving presence in the universe that cared about me.

Experience of Spiritual Life

The 'Experience of Spiritual Life' theme is made up of comments made by Lilly that reflect the ongoing experience of her spiritual life. Love became the central theme in Lilly's spiritual life, like Sam and Paul. At the same time, she also expressed that Meher Baba gave her a sense of purpose in being alive in the universe, a sense very much missing from her childhood.

- That he loves me more than I can ever love myself. I absolutely know that to be true. Sometimes I experience it, but I always know it, always. It's the anchor to my being. An absolute anchor to my being.
- That kind of feeling. It is a very joyful, wonderful feeling of being caught in the net.

- What I wanted and what I got was purpose. Purpose to the universe and purpose for being in the universe. I never had that before: knowing about reincarnation and evolution and involution and what our journey is for.
- Baba's whole system, whole cosmology, just made so much sense to me. Over the years Baba's cosmology still makes more sense to me than anybody else's does.

Expressions of Devotion

The 'Expressions of Devotion' theme is made up of comments made by Lilly that outline the ways in which she practices her spiritual life. While Lilly stated that she preformed little outward spiritual devotion like prayers or meditation, she considers her professional work as a act of service to the master, the same as Sam and Paul. Also, remembrance plays an important role for Lilly as it did for Sam. Unlike the others, Lilly focused on behaving harmoniously toward others as a central concern in her spiritual life.

- [Service] It is what I do for a living. It's been what I do in my personal life too.
- I do remember Baba as often as I can during the day
- The spiritual path is being healthy and contributing and taking care of my obligations and duties and responsibilities. I see that as serving God best, for me and for most people I know. Everyone has a different path though.
- We are all brothers and sisters in God. That speaks to the kind of behavior that one needs to have. I feel that strongly.

- Baba helped me and it has been such a blessing. I have always been so slow to forgive and I didn't know how to. Baba has taught me how to forgive.

Lilly's Therapeutic Practice Themes

In analysis of the text focused on Lilly's therapeutic practice, the same five primary themes found in Sam's and Paul's interviews emerged: **a) Formal Training** - or colleges attended and other professional training; **b) Type of Practice** - including types of clients; **c) Philosophy of Therapy** - how she articulates the underlying meaning of her approach with clients; **d) Techniques** - which include the methods she uses; and **e) Spiritual Dimensions of Therapist in Practice** - which are the statements Lilly makes about how her spiritual life is impacted by her professional life.

Table 6. Lilly's Therapeutic Practice Themes

Formal Training	Type of Practice	Philosophy of Therapy	Techniques	Spiritual Dimensions of Therapist in Practice
Formal training: mental health facilities, addictions therapy, hypnotherapy	Type of practice: "Into the college system"/"probably 90% clinical"	Limits of therapy: "supportive stuff"	Addictions Counseling	"I see it as service"
	"Drug offenses get sent to me"	Focus of practice: "help people empower themselves from the inside out"/"notice how they feel physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually"/"normal 18-25 year old kind of stuff"	"supportive stuff"	"I really love most people"
		"Everyone has a spiritual side"/"talking about spirituality"		"Every moment is a gift from God"
				Spiritual growth vs. Maturation
				"Less judgmental of others"
				"Feel blessed to be a counselor"/"I get more out of it then they do"
				"Less critical of myself"

Note. The phrases under each heading are quotes from the participant, while the thematic headings are analyst-constructed typologies.

Formal Training

The 'Formal Training' theme is made up of comments made by Lilly that outlines her college and graduate school training. Like Paul, her training was traditional in nature, including a great deal of clinical work.

- My undergraduate degree was in Comparative Religion. I completed all but one course in sociology, I didn't like the psych department there at all. I was a sociology major and then it was the sixties, early seventies and I switched over to religion my senior year and completed that.
- At the [name] Clinic they had wonderful training for tech levels and wonderful groups and teachings; and they really let you be a part of staffing.
- It was [college name] School of Public Health and it was a new program. It was a program in community mental health.
- I took the one at [hospital name], it was a teaching hospital and I really wanted to be there. I got fabulous training there.
- Then about four years ago I did some extensive training in psychotherapeutic hypnosis.

Type of Practice

The 'Type of Practice' theme is made up of comments made by Lilly that talk about the kinds of clients she has, and how she structures her practice. As shown below, Lilly works with a college students on issues pertinent to that population: drug and

alcohol abuse, relationship problems, career issues, etc.

- Anyway, at this point I was glad to get back into alcohol and drug, and into a state college system.
- Probably 90% clinical. Just a lot of supportive stuff, developmental, normalizing behaviors, I came from pathology viewpoint. I switched around. I still know it when I see it, but the reality is for the most part it is real normal developmental issues about confusion, separation anxiety, career choices, relationship stuff. A lot of students bring very severe issues with them to college.
- We do referrals for medication, usually for depression when needed. Have to hook them up with doctors in the community.
- I'm the identified one [drug and alcohol abuse]. I do probably seventy-five percent that is clinical, and the other twenty-five is educational. And I do educational groups, discipline groups for kids that have been caught in the Resident Hall with alcohol violations.
- I do see a good many kids on probation for DUI's or some other legal problem. I get calls before kids come to school about more serious offenses and I make decisions about involving other agencies in town. Most of the other problems are about relationships and anxiety and depression and getting through school, you know really normal 18 to 25 year old kind of stuff.

Philosophy of Therapy

The ‘Philosophy of Therapy’ theme is made up of comments made by Lilly that point to the underlying outlook and meaning behind her approach to working with clients.

Lilly’s focus is on empowering the students with whom she works, but like the others, she also looking toward the spiritual sides of her clients. In a very real sense, the expanded spiritual consciousness she brings into the therapeutic setting allows for the possibilities of this wider focus.

- I operate more and more in terms of how people can empower themselves rather than interpretations from the outside. I hope I help people more from the inside out, chose from the inside out. I am real supportive. I can also be very direct with people with issues about alcohol and drugs. I am directive and assertive and confrontive with the bull-shit. I don’t waste my time in things like that anymore.
- I ask them to look at is how they feel physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.
- I mean everyone has a spiritual side.
- I like to talk about integrity and that to me is about spirituality in an authentic and mundane kind of way.

Techniques

The ‘Techniques’ theme is made up of comments made by Lilly about the methods she utilizes in her approach to clients. She uses mostly talk therapy, but unlike the other therapists interviewed she also includes hypnotherapy in her work.

- I’m the identified one [drug and alcohol abuse]. I do probably seventy-five percent that is clinical, and the other twenty five is educational. And I do educational groups, discipline groups for kids that have been caught in the Resident Hall with alcohol violations.
- Hypnosis
- I hope I help people more from the inside out, chose from the inside out. I am real supportive. I can also be very direct with people with issues about alcohol and drugs.

Spiritual Dimensions of Therapist in Practice

The ‘Spiritual Dimensions of Therapist in Practice’ theme is made up of comments made by Lilly about what she experiences spiritually as she practices professionally. That is, how she draws upon her spiritual side for her work, and how is her spiritual life is impacted by her work. While the others interviewed also spoke how their practice effects their spiritual life, Lilly spoke more specifically about how she has changed as a result of her work, including how she has become less judgmental over time.

- Like any other Baba lover who is a therapist knows that Baba’s motto is Mastery in the Servitude, I see my work as service. I mean, this is how I serve.

- At this point in my life, it is all service. Some people I don't like, some days I don't want to be there, it is job, however most of the time, I am so grateful.
- I am not this glorious person. It's simply that I genuinely like most people and can find something likable or lovable about most people.
- I just don't feel like anything is happening in therapy that isn't Baba working. I try to remember that. I try not to take myself very seriously.
- [spiritual growth vs. natural maturation] I would love to think I've grown so much spiritually that I am just maturing and that I'm going to a new level on the spiritual plane. However, I doubt that. Hahaha, I think it is probably maturation and doing some very serious inner work and praying a lot. If it is spiritual, it is a gift I've been given. Some of it's volitional, but I think it is a lot maturation and answers to some prayers.
- I get much more out of it than they do. I know that. It really serves my soul and who I am, and what I think is living in the world I'm so lucky to be able to do what I do for a living. I am grateful for that all the time. I am really grateful.
- I've gotten so much less judgmental over time.
- I think for me I have been so self-critical over the years that I have criticized in others what I have been critical of in myself.

Summary of Lilly's Themes

Unlike Sam and Paul, Lilly's eventual coming to follow Meher Baba developed

upon the heels of a crisis in her life. She entered into her spiritual life out of a sense of unhappiness or what even could be described as desperation, which seemed to serve as a springboard into this new way of seeing and interpreting her life. Like the others, she also seemed to undergo a dramatic transformation in her consciousness – she was caught in what she calls ‘Baba’s net’. Meher Baba became her father, a loving presence who cares for her and who gives meaning and purpose to the universe. This was, after all, the very thing that was so absent in her experience of growing up in a Jewish family. It seems as if the paucity of this sense of purpose helped propel her into seeking out what was missing from her personal view of herself in the world.

No less than Sam or Paul, Lilly expresses a deep inner relationship with her master, the essence of which she also describes as love. Love is the central focus of her relationship with Meher Baba, and it is out of this inner focus that she interprets how she sees herself and how she ultimately relates to others in the world. It supplies her with a deep sense of meaning and values, giving her, like the other therapists interviewed, an inner gauge against which to measure her inner and outer life.

Remembrance of the master, like the other therapists, is a major theme in her spiritual life. It is remembrance of the master throughout the day that helps to nurture and develop her inner life. As an expression of service, her professional therapeutic work is a primary way of displaying her devotion to the master. While Lilly states that she doesn’t focus much on prayers, or meditation, or other forms of devotion articulated by the other interviewees, unlike the others, her statements tend to focus on how she acts towards others. This, I feel plays a pivotal role in how Lilly expresses her devotion to God. She

feels deeply the importance of treating other people as brothers and sister in God, even though there may be significant disagreements. In keeping with that view, she spoke lovingly about the value of forgiveness in her life, how forgiveness is a quality she has worked on developing in her spiritual life.

Lilly's therapeutic training was also tradition (with no formal training in transpersonal psychology) in nature, with a great deal of time spent in alcohol and drug abuse clinical settings. However, like the other therapists interviewed, it is evident to me that Lilly orients her practice from a transpersonal perspective. She brings to her therapeutic work her own developing consciousness focused on an internal relationship with God. Again, as Vaughan (1979) states, the context of counseling is established in the person of the therapist. While Lilly does not focus very much on the spiritual sides of her clients, the presence of her consciousness in the therapeutic setting allows for the possibilities of interjecting and addressing the overt or hidden spiritual connections in her clients lives. This lack of focus on her clients spiritual lives is probably due to the make up of the population she serves, in that college age students may have less of an inclination to focus on that part of themselves.

It is interesting to note that in talking about their professional lives, both males tended to stress the ways they did their work and the kinds of effects it had on their clients – more the nuts and bolts of the work. On the other hand, while Lilly certainly did address the ways and effects of her practice, she tended to talk more about how the work impacted her – she spoke from a more personal standpoint – how her own personal change and growth is one result of her professional work.

Summary

As mentioned above, by proceeding through both a within-case and between-case analysis, and moving from codes to themes, the constant comparative method yielded four primary themes for both Sam's and Lilly's spiritual life: a) Before Spiritual Life, b) Transformative Experience, c) Experience of Spiritual Life, and d) Expressions of Devotion. Analysis of Paul's data revealed these four themes plus one additional one: Spiritual Life Before Meher Baba. As this theme was such a distinctive and important one for Paul, I retained it as a primary theme. No other significant patterns or themes presented themselves in the data.

It is striking to me, that while each of these individuals came to their spiritual lives in different ways, they all share very similar outlooks in how they describe their inner spiritual lives and how they approach their devotional practices. Each expresses the importance of remembrance of God or the master throughout the day; each speaks about an internal relationship with the master; each feels that the spiritual essence they experience in their internal lives is love, and that this love is a gift which they refer to as grace; they all speak about surrendering inwardly to the master; they all consider their therapeutic practice as service to the master, which in turn is a conscious act of devotion; and, finally, each includes in their ongoing practices traveling to both Meher Center and India. They diverge at several points in that Sam actively meditates, where as Paul and Lilly do not. Paul recites certain prayers, where Lilly (and perhaps Sam) do not. Paul's attitude toward his spiritual life tends to focus on the experience he has of his own limitations, where as Sam and Lilly tend to articulate the ways they have grown. I think

this can be accounted for more in terms of emphasis than of substantially divergent experiences.

As also stated above, analysis of the data for all three participants demonstrated five primary themes for their therapeutic practice: **a) Formal Training, b) Type of Practice, c) Philosophy of Therapy, d) Techniques, and e) Spiritual Dimensions of Therapist in Practice.** Again, no other significant patterns or themes presented themselves in the data.

It is apparent to me that each of these therapists, while their populations and techniques may at times be dissimilar, can be considered transpersonal in orientation. Each sets the context for therapeutic work in the person of the therapist. I was also struck at how important it is to these therapists to find spiritual meaning for themselves in their professional lives. They consider the work they have chosen to be service for God. A vital part of their spiritual path, they look for ways that it informs and educates (spiritually) their ongoing inner life. As their spiritual lives continually permeate their professional work, they each give the strong impression that they are trying to practice, in their individual ways, what they hold to be their deepest and most cherished beliefs.

The research was structured in such a way as to focus on two primary areas in the participant's lives: their spiritual life and their therapeutic practice. It was anticipated that these two focuses would become the major analytical **categories** of the study. When analysis was complete, no other category arose through the data as an addition to those anticipated.

CHAPTER SIX

Summarization and Recommendations

Introduction

It is the contention of this research that both bhakti and karma practices constitute legitimate and major spiritual paths, and as such, should be accorded a significant place in evolving transpersonal literature. As stated in chapter one, a review of the most influential transpersonal writing of the past thirty years reveals the relative absence of these two important approaches. In working toward building a grounded theory of bhakti and karma practices for the purpose of promoting their inclusion in transpersonal theory and practice, this research study examined the effect of these practices on the spiritual and professional lives, that is, the lived experience of three transpersonal psychotherapists.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the preceding research analysis and interpretation and additionally to make recommendations for further study. The chapter will begin by relating the major themes that arose in the analysis in chapter five to the literature review outlined in chapter two. Then, a discussion will outline ways the research findings of this research can lead to theory building concerning bhakti and karma practices. The chapter will then focus on the implications of the research findings on the fields of both transpersonal psychology and counselor education. I will conclude with some personal reflections concerning both the process and outcomes of this project.

Connection To Transpersonal Literature

As outlined in chapter five, the two major categories that were evident from the interviews are the participant's spiritual life and their therapeutic practice. Under the

spiritual life category five major themes were garnered from the manuscripts: **a)** before spiritual life, **b)** spiritual life before Meher Baba, **c)** transformative experience, **d)** experience of spiritual life, and **e)** expressions of devotion. The analysis pointed out that only Paul experienced a spiritual life before coming to follow Meher Baba. Five major themes were also gathered from the therapeutic practice category: **a)** formal training, **b)** type of practice, **c)** philosophy of therapy, **d)** techniques, and **e)** spiritual dimensions of the therapist in practice. The following two sections connect these themes back to the transpersonal literature outlined in chapter two.

Spiritual Life Themes

The spiritual life themes are related back to transpersonal literature in order to demonstrate ways these themes are transpersonal in nature; that is, to show that these patterns and experiences are indeed transpersonal according to the descriptions of major writers in the field. In addition, this section outlines the ways that the participants' experiences are identified concretely as both bhakti and karma in nature. I have focused on the participants' experience of their spiritual life – which includes the themes: spiritual life before Meher Baba (Paul only), transformative experience, experience of spiritual life, and expressions of devotion. However, I exclude the 'before spiritual life' theme as it does not appear to have a significant bearing on this discussion.

As mentioned in chapter two, Walsh and Vaughan (1993) define transpersonal psychology as “the area of psychology that focuses on the study of transpersonal experiences and related phenomena. These phenomena include the causes, effects and correlates of transpersonal experiences and development, as well as the disciplines and

practices inspired by them” (1993, p. 203). Central to this description is the meaning given to transpersonal experiences “as experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche or cosmos” (1993, p. 203). As the definition focuses on experiences rather than a particular theoretical or spiritual understanding, it allows for a wide variety of interpretations, religious or nonreligious.

Cited as providing the philosophical underpinning to transpersonal psychology (Cortright, 1997; Vaughan, 1995; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993; Wilber 1997; Wittine, 1993), Huxley’s (1945) perennial philosophy points out that at the core of all higher religions is a ‘Highest Common Factor,’ an ineffable and transcendent truth that has been expressed throughout history. He described it as:

The divine Ground of all existence is a spiritual Absolute, ineffable in terms of discursive thought, but (in certain circumstances) susceptible of being directly experienced and realized by the human being. This Absolute is the God-without-form of Hindu and Christian mystical phraseology. The last end of man, the ultimate reason for human existence, is unitive knowledge of the divine Ground - the knowledge that can come only to those who are prepared to “die to self” and so make room, as it were, for God. (Huxley, 1945, p. 21)

It is clear from the participants’ descriptions of the experience of their spiritual lives that they have had and continue to have what can only be considered transpersonal experiences. All express that they have come into contact with something beyond their

own ego existence.

Sam: When I am in my mind and not in companionship then it is noisier, it is confusing, less certainty, more judgmental, more cynical, critical, all those things that go with the mental energy. And yet, when I am in my companionship in my heart space, it is so much simpler because there is a feeling of whatever you're doing it is okay.

Paul: I was sitting in the tomb by myself, and I had this incredible physical sensation, it wasn't an emotional sensation, it was physical, that my chest was opening up with some process of this love.

Lilly: Over time Baba became my father. It really has been a long time and I am not sure that didn't kind of happen immediately, but I don't remember, what I remember is that over time I just recognized more and more Baba as a loving presence in the universe that cared about me.

Soul or bhakti paths, as outlined by Cortright (1997) are devotional in nature, and include devotion, love, surrender and prayer. Soul paths tend to be theistic, where the highest reality is seen as both a personal and an impersonal Divine Being or God.

The goal is to connect more deeply to the inner soul and to the Divine. An inward focus on prayer, call, surrender, aspiration, faith, opening to the Divine, devotion, bhakti, love - these are the godward movements that bring the seeker into deeper connection with the inner soul and which call on the Divine to manifest in a communion with the soul (Cortright, 1997, p.135).

A reflection of this path can be seen in all of the participants interviewed, as each

focuses on the experience of love they have had in their lives as a result of coming into contact with the master.

Sam: It's [love] the essence of what it is about. The heart center, the approach to life. It feels most central. Everything else is just swirling dust.

Paul: All I could say was like someone took this container of love and poured it directly into my heart. It wasn't emotional, it was physical. I felt the love just surging through my system, it connected right there. Then after that I felt that the doubts were gone and I just knew that this was where I was supposed to be.

Lilly: He loves me more than I can ever love myself. I absolutely know that to be true. Sometimes I experience it, but I always know it, always. It's the anchor to my being. An absolute anchor to my being.

In speaking of the master, Meher Baba says that "in those who contact him, he awakens a love that consumes all selfish desires in the flame of the one desire to serve him (1967, p. 268)." In speaking further of bhakti he says:

When love is deep and intense, it is called bhakti, or devotion. In its initial stages devotion is expressed through symbol worship, supplication before the deities, reverence and allegiance to the revealed scriptures, or the pursuit of the Highest through abstract thinking. In its more advanced stages devotion expresses itself as interest in human welfare and the service of humanity, love and reverence for saints, and

allegiance and obedience to a spiritual Master. These stages have their relative values and relative results. Love for a living Perfect master is a unique stage of devotion, for it eventually gets transformed into para-bhakti or divine love. (Meher Baba, 1967, p. 55-56)

Ram Dass refers to the path of devotional service as an offering of love, where “helping becomes an act of reverence, worship, gratitude” (1958, p. 226). And Kornfield reminds us that a path of service “brings us face to face with selflessness and nonseparation as surely as our inner meditation does. At its best, service becomes an act of selfless giving, of acting from the heart without attachment to praise or fame or even the beneficial result of the action” (1993, pp. 279-280). All of the interviewees articulate the view that their professional therapeutic work is a conscious act of devotion.

Sam: It is pure service. If I can get myself out of the way, look who’s left. Because anything of spirit is central. I think we are here to find spirit.

Paul: Well, obviously I am supposed to be here doing this. Baba wants me to do that. I feel the role of service is for me to involve myself in these peoples’ lives and to in some way on a deeper level unbeknownst to them many times try to connect on some spiritual level.

Lilly: [Service] it is what I do for a living. It’s been what I do in my personal life too.

Concerning the path of karma, Meher Baba concurs with both Ram Dass and Kornfield when he says that “by again and again offering one’s life in the service of

others is it possible to rise to the unsurpassed completeness of realized truth. God is not to be sought by running away from life but by establishing unity with the one in the many” (Meher Baba, 1962, p.12).

Therapeutic Practice

The therapeutic practice themes are related back to transpersonal literature in order to demonstrate ways these themes are transpersonal in nature; that is, to show that these patterns and experiences are indeed transpersonal, again according to the descriptions of major writers in the field. I have focused on the participants’ experience of their therapeutic practice including the following themes: formal training, type of practice, philosophy of therapy, techniques, and spiritual dimensions of the therapist in practice.

An empirical study (Hutton, 1994) concerned with how transpersonal psychotherapists differ from other practitioners found that what transpersonal therapists “have in common is the openness to the spiritual dimensions of their own lives, the lives of their clients, and to a variety of experiences the clients present” (p. 168).

The practitioners of transpersonal psychology tend to report having had spiritual experiences, follow some spiritual practice, and believe that such experiences are important. They have had training in transpersonal psychology and believe that spiritual issues are relevant to psychotherapy. These are the main factors which differentiate them from the other practitioners in this study. (p. 176)

The preceding descriptions of the spiritual lives and therapeutic practices of the three

therapists interviewed for this study support that all three could be considered transpersonal in orientation from the point of view of the Hutton study. All have had spiritual experiences, all follow a spiritual practice, and all believe that such experiences are important.

Transpersonal psychotherapy, according to Vaughan (1995), is concerned with healing the whole person including the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the individual. As in traditional psychotherapy, Vaughan believes that the therapeutic relationship can provide a safe environment conducive to healing the whole person. As outlined in chapter four, both Sam and Lilly expressed the same holistic focus in their work, and Paul referred to the possibility of real mental and emotional change only happening from a spiritual perspective. This view is supported by Vaughan's idea of spiritual health, which grows out of the transpersonal Self (p. 39).

Sam: I categorize it in five terms. Holistic Psychotherapy. I look at the emotional, the intellectual, the physical, social and the spiritual.

Paul: And I recognize that and I know that in my opinion change factors come from spiritual essence not from ego orientation.

Lilly: I ask them to look at how they feel physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

One of the qualities of the Self is that it is able to develop "healing awareness", qualities of consciousness that enter into the individual's inner psychic workings once the transpersonal self is awakened. These qualities include humor, wisdom, generosity, and a capacity for nonattachment, self-transcendence, and unconditional love. Such

experiences can precipitate a healing effect to all sides of the psyche, mitigating physical, mental, emotional and spiritual maladies. From a transpersonal point of view, focusing on the clients' spiritual dimensions, to whatever degree possible according to the individual predilections of each client, brings about this healing awareness. Cortright agrees that "transpersonal psychology views all psychological processes against the backdrop of spiritual unfolding" (1997, p. 22). Each of the therapists interviewed articulate the importance of focusing on the spiritual whenever possible.

Sam: I may not change the personality structure but I am going to a) make them more compassionate for their foibles and b) let the spirit flow through those things and do the healing of the spirit.

Paul: Well, I think the foundation is that, I don't think that there is anything that I would do that I didn't relate to on some spiritual level because I don't feel like there is any real purpose to be around other than that.

Lilly: I like to talk about integrity and that to me is about spirituality in an authentic and mundane kind of way.

Additionally, Vaughan (1979) asserts that transpersonal psychotherapy in a therapeutic setting is characterized by: **a)** context, or the beliefs and values of the therapist; **b)** content, or the experiences of the person in counseling; and, **c)** the process, which is constituted by the natural developmental processes that most people experience, and which culminates in various forms of self transcendence. Both Boorstein (1997) and Cortright (1997) agree that it is the theoretical and methodological framework, not

technique, that informs the therapeutic process, and which is most important in defining transpersonal psychotherapy. Indeed all techniques from any school of psychotherapy or psychology, can be considered transpersonal if the transpersonal framework is in place. And by far the most significant ingredient of this framework is the consciousness of the therapist. The forgoing examples show that the therapists interviewed in this study all demonstrate a capacity for setting a transpersonal context from which to work with the clients' content.

In addition, all of the therapists might agree that a primary reason for introducing spiritual nuances into therapeutic sessions is to help expand the client's consciousness. In turn, this helps to create the possibility that he or she will be better able to draw upon the healing potential of spiritual insights and energy. In the therapeutic process, consciousness is equal to growth and ultimately to health. As such, transpersonal psychotherapy is concerned with exploring what helps or hinders health and the expansion of consciousness. "From a transpersonal perspective, consciousness heals" (Cortright, 1997, p. 56). Boorstein concurs with this view, stating that "spiritual approaches have specific psychotherapeutic value when seen as being used to resolve our fear systems; they help us cultivate compassion, forgiveness, and acceptance and help us learn to temper our anger" ((Boorstein, 1997, p. 25). Keeping this in mind, below: Sam expressed the therapeutic importance of discovering self love through therapy; Paul talked about ways of introducing spiritual ideas into therapy only after the client is stable and therefore more receptive to the perspective; and, Lilly spoke about her personal transformation as a result of her spiritual life.

Sam: A part of the celebration of life is to give love. In simple terms that is what I am doing. I don't want to have anybody misconstrue the love as being a physical love, or a sexual love or anything like that. It is a much deeper love than that. It is a sense of honoring that person. He's been sent here to learn how to love. Love themselves and then the world. First you have to love self. You talk about simple issues, that's all it is. Call it depression, call it anxiety, call it neurosis, it's all about the lack of love for self.

Paul: I think your spiritual function is in every aspect of your life and so you know we just have to get down to the bottom line. And I might say if we are talking about existential therapy, I might say, "well you know Plato says nothing really has any value except these ultimate truths, so basically you know unless we tie into that most of our lives is rambling around into nothingness." I've got a guy right now, he's a very bright guy, and we talk back and forth about that once he got stabilized and once he started making some progress in his other stuff.

Lilly: I am not this glorious person. It's simply that I genuinely like most people and can find something likable or lovable about most people. Some people I can't and some it is just not, there is something that doesn't click. Most people I have genuine affection for, though.

I've gotten so much less judgmental over time.

I think for me I have been so self-critical over the years that I have criticized in others what I have been critical of in myself. What I have noticed over time is that a) I've no right to do that and b) getting less critical of myself has opened me up to be less critical of others.

Future Research and Theory Building

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, it is the hope of this research that it may eventually lead toward developing grounded theory concerning bhakti and karma practices of psychotherapists, and the influence such practices have on their professional work. In order for grounded theory to be well constructed it must be based on numerous cases over time. Clearly the accounts of three therapists do not provide the basis for good theory development. Therefore, additional cases are needed that include psychotherapeutic practitioners from across a spectrum of spiritual perspectives, unlike the current study, which is composed of therapists from the same spiritual approach.

To begin with, I would gather at least twelve additional cases from therapists who follow Meher Baba, bringing the number to fifteen. To that I would add participants from a wide variety of religious perspectives to assure a broader representation of experience, both spiritual/religious and professional. This would include 20 Christian therapists (as the West is mostly inhabited by Christians) who are mystically oriented, assuring the presence of people with a more self-conscious inner life. Finally, I would add twenty-five therapists from various Eastern traditions, including Hindus (i.e., Siddha Yoga therapists) and Sufis (Muslim mystics who are psychotherapists), each of which include aspects of both bhakti and karma practices. This would bring the total

number of therapists interviewed to sixty, assuring a more solid base of data from which to draw theoretical conclusions.

At the same time, the thematic findings from this research project have implications for both the fields of transpersonal psychology and counselor education, both addressed in the following two sections.

Implications for Transpersonal Psychology

It is the contention of this research that both bhakti and karma practices constitute legitimate and major spiritual paths, and as such, should be accorded a significant place in the evolving transpersonal literature. Based upon the limited findings of this study, insights from both bhakti and karma perspectives have a significant contribution to make to transpersonal understanding as well as transpersonal psychotherapeutic practice.

It is interesting to note that all three therapists I interviewed had very similar experiences in their spiritual life. All three point to: the transforming effect of love, the importance of the master, the gift of grace, the focus on certain devotional activities, and the importance of maintaining an interior spiritual life based upon companionship with God. These themes have important implications for the field of transpersonal psychology, including the following:

- The development of love;
- The healing qualities of devotional practices;
- The necessity of grace vs. individual volition (Is grace needed for the initiation of a genuine inner life, or can this be achieved on one's own? And what is the ongoing relationship between the two?)

- The perils of transpersonal psychology (Ellis, 1989); such as whether focusing on spiritual things leads one to become deluded about what is really taking place intrapsychically; and
- The idea of a master and the possible dangers involved with false masters (Anthony et al., 1987).

The themes arising from the interviewees' therapeutic practices are also strikingly identical. These themes suggest: the importance of having a spiritual perspective when practicing psychotherapy, the need to look at clients holistically, the limits of ego based therapy, the importance of the therapist and client working together, and helping clients recognize and utilize their innate spiritual potential. Again, this suggests important implications for the field of transpersonal psychotherapy.

- The role of the psychotherapist in recommending spiritual or religious interventions.
- Clarifying the difference between a psychotherapist and a spiritual director.
- The place of devotional activities in psychological healing, including the degree of stability necessary before such activities are utilized.
- The type of training required for therapists to be competent in working with clients' spiritual dimensions.
- Being able to determine the degree to which a client's experience is genuinely spiritual or more an admixture of psychological and social undercurrents.
- Exploring whether or not it is important for therapists to have a spiritual life if they are to work with clients' spiritual concerns.

Clearly more research is needed. While traditional mystical religious literature from the East and the West has an overwhelming number of examples of both bhakti and karma expressions, a grounded theory (as mentioned above) based upon modern practitioners (i.e., transpersonal psychotherapists) is needed to place these perspectives within the current transpersonal milieu.

Implications for Counselor Education

Considering the implications of transpersonal psychology on mainstream theories of counseling, the transpersonal school can be seen as an outgrowth of both humanistic (Walsh, 1993) and existential psychology (Cortright, 1997). Existential therapy, for instance, “grew out of a desire to help people address themes in contemporary life” (Corey, 1991). Yalom (1998), a leading existential psychotherapist points out that the major themes that existential psychology encourages are “death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness” (p.172). Central to the existential outlook is that human beings are always in a process of evolving and changing and trying to make sense out of their existence (Corey, 1991).

Humanistic therapy in general, includes in its fold existential, person centered, and Gestalt therapy (Corey, 1991). Abram Maslow, one of the founding fathers of humanistic psychology was also a key figure in the development of transpersonal psychology (Walsh, 1993). In his humanistic writings, he criticized Freud’s concentration on pathology, and focused instead on the developmental processes of so-called normal people pointing out a ‘self-actualizing’ tendency in human nature (Corey, 1991). That is, inherent in humanistic psychology is the belief that people have an innate

capacity to move away from pathology toward psychological growth and health. “The humanistic perspective assumes that people are essentially constructive, able to make choices, and will inherently self-actualize given the proper environment” (Strohl, 1998, p.398).

Transpersonal psychology’s preoccupation with both psychological and spiritual health and development (Cortright, 1997), can be seen as a natural extension and direct outgrowth of these two theoretical approaches. Existential therapy’s concern with the individual evolving in ways that seek meaning and make sense out of life and, the focus of humanistic psychology on the healthy development of people toward self-actualization can be seen as direct precursors to transpersonal psychology (Cortright, 1997).

Considering the implications on the practice of counseling, as mentioned in chapter two, opinion polls report that high percentages of Americans reveal the significance of religious or spiritual dimensions in their lives (Bart, 1998; Bullis, 1992; Kelly, 1994; and Hutton, 1994). At the same time, while institutions of higher learning may see the importance of regarding the spiritual/religious parts of peoples lives, very few of these institutions have any formal training that addresses this crucial component from a psychological/developmental (or spiritual) point of view (Kelly, 1994).

Ivey (Van Hesteren & Ivey, 1990), as well as the American Counseling Association (Myers, 1992) see the primary task of counseling as not simply the remediation or prevention of problems, but rather, they see problems as opportunities for growth and development. In addition, currently a case is being made for including

spiritual dimensions as a developmental necessity in counselor education (Kelly, 1994; Matthews, 1999; Porter, 1995; Worthington, 1989).

Using a developmental framework, it is possible to surmise that if a goal of counseling is to also help people develop spiritually, then counselors themselves need to focus on spiritual development. Counselor educators, in turn, should be promoting such development in their educational processes. It also seems reasonable to conclude that the more developed a counselor is spiritually, the better able she or he will be to help someone who is struggling in ways that include spiritual or religious dimensions. As the personal growth and development of counselors is a central concern in numerous models of clinical counselor supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 1992), further work needs to be done to include in those supervision models all sides of an individual counselor's personality, including the religious/spiritual.

Looking at this issue from a multicultural perspective, Pate (1992) articulates that becoming aware of a person's religious/spiritual beliefs is an important aspect of multicultural awareness. Multicultural awareness has for some time been a major concern of counselor education (Ponterotto, 1995). Identified as the "fourth force" in counseling (Steward et al, 1998), "multicultural competence has been identified by some leaders in the field as an ethical imperative" (p. 13). In short, a strong case has been made for counselors to be adequately trained in multicultural awareness if they are to be considered prepared for the field (Coleman, 1998). Pendersen points out "that effective counselors must consider the totality of the client's existence and acknowledge the effect of cultural context on the counselor, the client, and the counseling relationship" (p. 148).

It is a short step, therefore, to the conclusion that counselors need to become aware of (and therefore more educated about) the religious and spiritual aspects of their clients' lives as an important part of a larger multicultural awareness. If counselors don't include what may be a foundation part of their clients' lives in the therapeutic setting, a great (and unethical) disservice will be done.

In addition, Grof and Grof (1987) have also contributed the insight that there are psychological conditions – labeled spiritual emergence and emergency - which may be, in and of themselves, specifically spiritual in origin. Clearly an understanding of the symptoms of these conditions would only enhance a therapist's ability to treat clients who may suffer in this way.

I conclude from all of this, that more research is needed to understand the significance of approaching clients from a more transpersonal perspective. For instance:

- The training of counselors to deal with the spiritual sides of people's lives as an important aspect of multicultural awareness.
- The ways (and limits) counseling should contribute to a client's spiritual or religious growth.
- The role of counselor supervision in encouraging spiritual growth in counselor trainees.
- The usefulness of counseling from a transpersonal perspective compared to more traditional modes of therapy.
- There may be a conflict with First Amendment issues in State funded schools that mandate courses in counselor training that include spirituality.

Of course, all of the above presupposes a recognition of the legitimacy of the spiritual side of human nature, a presupposition that the scientific mindset of modern social sciences is hesitant to make. However, following the public's recognition of the significance of the spiritual dimension in humanity, it bodes well that counseling institutions are beginning to recognize the importance of focusing attention on training counselors to recognize and incorporate the spiritual life when treating clients.

While I anticipated that the interviewees' spiritual lives would have many commonalities, at the same time, I am struck with how similar they are thematically. Seeing how each therapist approached their professional life gives me real insight into the practice of psychotherapy from a transpersonal perspective. Each of the participants practice with different populations, and yet each is able to adapt their practice to include spiritual dimensions. This is possible because each brings to their respective clinical settings a spiritual consciousness that sets the context for therapy. And it is this expanded context that provides an openness and willingness to explore the client's content from a spiritual perspective. These therapists consider the work they have chosen to be a service for God. A vital part of their spiritual path, they look for ways that the work informs and educates (spiritually) their ongoing inner life. As Cortright (1997) comments:

The client's consciousness is, of course, the center of the therapy process. But of equal importance is the therapist's consciousness. For transpersonal psychotherapy is defined not merely by the theoretical framework but by the practitioner's own deepening spiritual journey, which gives meaning and life to this framework. It is the therapist's

own actual experience of opening to the Divine (whatever form or path this may take) that provides the atmosphere to support the client's multidimensional growth. Being a depth therapist does not mean the therapist has fully healed and worked through all of his or her issues, just that the therapist is actively engaged with his or her own healing. Similarly, being a transpersonal therapist does not mean a person needs to be enlightened or a saint, just that in addition to being engaged with inner, depth work, he or she is actively committed to a spiritual path of consciousness development (p. 56).

The people interviewed in this study articulate how vitally necessary and effective bringing spiritual aspects into therapy can be. Many people are reaching out for personal help in ways that only spiritual nourishment can provide. If therapists are not well trained and, in turn, sensitive to the needs of their clients, a great opportunity will be lost. At the same time, as Boorstein (1996), Vaughan (1995), Wilber (1977) and others have stated, I also believe that spiritual kinds of interventions should only be introduced into therapy if the client agrees and is interested in perusing such approaches. Also, more needs to be said, and perhaps researched, to clarify the boundaries between a psychotherapist and a spiritual director. I believe that the work of a therapist employs spiritual interventions to help clients heal physically, mentally and emotionally; while the work of a spiritual guide, on the other hand, focuses primarily on helping the individual develop their spiritual life. Transpersonal therapists should be engaged in using the client's innate spiritual side in the service of helping heal the presenting problem, which

may mean – depending upon the disposition of the client – aiding the client in some aspects of spiritual growth and development. This is different, I believe, than being a spiritual director whose primary focus it is to assist a person in their life-long spiritual journey. However, I feel plenty of gray area arises when trying to distinguish between the two, leaving adequate room for blurry boundaries which may lead to confusion or even unethical behavior on the part of counselors.

Finally, I believe that the theory and practice of psychology, psychotherapy, and counseling is at the beginning of a spiritual renaissance, the impact of which will completely transform the ways therapists do their job in the next fifty to a hundred years. The experiences and insights of these few therapists represent what I feel to be the kinds of ways more and more people will be living their lives. And it will be incumbent upon the field of counseling to train its practitioners to be prepared to help people include and address the spiritual dimension in their lives.

Personal Reflections

It is interesting to note that at no time during the interviews did any mention of cultural or social differences between East and West arise. This is somewhat surprising given that the participants' spiritual master is from India, that all had spent meaningful and significant time there, and all plan to return over the years. Outwardly, each participant looked very Western in dress and manner, and appeared to live mostly mainstream middle class lives. There was nothing about them that stood out as particularly Eastern or foreign. Neither was there any mention that it was significant that Meher Baba was an Eastern master and that this had an important influence on how they

lived their spiritual lives. Additionally, it is also telling that it never occurred to me to inquire about the differences or tensions between Eastern and Western approaches to following Meher Baba, or how Eastern (Indian) culture, spiritual or otherwise, had impacted their lives.

I feel that this is in part due to how little Meher Baba himself focused on cultural differences. Naturally these differences were present between his Eastern and Western followers, however, when he was around his followers, he tended to focus more on the internal spiritual aspects of life, minimizing the external cultural trappings. In addition, since the earliest times when Meher Baba established ashrams (spiritual facilities where followers live communally), he spoke out against the limitations and prejudices between casts and religions, and he would put people together in ways that would break down these stereotypes (Purdom, 1964). In keeping with his spiritual teachings, he saw these social prejudices as selfish limitations of the ego, and as such, a hindrance to spiritual growth and development (Meher Baba, 1967). Also, his personality was such that he was able to appeal to people transculturally. People who met him, no matter what their background, would often report that they felt completely at ease in his presence. In general, while it is common in the West to find art and other decorations inspired by the East in the homes of Meher Baba followers, by and large, Western followers outwardly live fairly standard middle-class lives. There is very little focus on the differences between Eastern and Western followers.

While some (Ellman & Tagert, 1993) have criticized groups (especially white, middle-class males) of appropriating the rituals and meanings of another culture, with Western followers of Meher Baba this is not the case, as he placed little value on outer rituals and ceremonies (Purdom, 1967). Meher Baba's distinctive lack of focus on cultural context is further underscored by the absence of outer forms of belonging that are normally associated with religions or cults. There is no organization to join, no initiation, no money to pay, no required rituals or prayers, and no hierarchy of disciples to whom followers must pay allegiance. Meher Baba would encourage people to follow the highest values in their own religion (Purdom, 1967); that it was not necessary to forsake their religious tradition to follow him. This paucity of outer forms leaves a great deal of room for individual interpretation in how to follow Meher Baba's path of bhakti and karma. In my own life, I feel this lack of outer forms was purposeful, leading me to look within myself for spiritual meaning and purpose. My feeling is that others who follow Meher Baba have a similar experience.

At the same time, while breaking down cultural taboos and encouraging multicultural mixing between his followers was a highly relevant theme in Meher Baba's life and teachings, this did not appear to be a focus in the lives or practice of the therapists interviewed. All three therapists are white, middle class, well educated, and tend to have clients who are like them. (Perhaps Sam and Lilly have some clients who are ethnically diverse, but they are probably few in number.) The question is: should these therapists be reaching out to people of other cultures, not so much to tell others about Meher Baba, but to include others in their therapeutic practice as a way of sharing

their expertise and promoting cross-cultural understanding? Based upon Meher Baba's life and teachings, is there a responsibility to help break down cultural barriers in this way?

I think all of the therapists interviewed would agree that promoting cross-cultural understanding is an important value in their lives, and that cultivating multicultural awareness an important asset as a psychotherapist. At the same time, they have each chosen a focus in counseling that has resulted in their treating selective populations. Lilly woks in a college setting, and basically takes whomever walks through the door. Both Sam and Paul are in private practice, which attracts people who can afford their services either through insurance or by paying directly. As some researchers (Coleman, 1998) have pointed out, clients look for counselors who tend to share their values, whom they feel are like them, thinking that these counselors will most likely be sympathetic to their problems. I don't necessarily see this as a lack of social responsibility on the part of these therapists, it's more a practical matter of making a living. I feel reasonably certain that these therapists wold say that all people suffer, rich or poor, educated or not, and that their work is a form of service to others – even though remuneration is involved.

At the same time, it is not unusual for Meher Baba followers to be working with populations with whom they are culturally different. Many Westerners live in India at the places associated with Meher Baba, and not only interact with Eastern Meher Baba followers, but interact in the broader culture as a direct consequence of their work in maintaining the spiritual retreats there. Also, it is not unusual to find followers working in jobs that are a cross-cultural in nature. For instance, I have worked for the past seven

years doing both counseling and community prevention work mostly with African American populations. My wife works in a poor Black community in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina helping to develop community resources, continuing work her mother did for more than thirty-five years. However, Meher Baba did not necessarily stress that his followers go out of their way to work with people of other cultures. His path of karma was more of a general mandate to serve in whatever way was most suitable to each person. In this sense, his motto of "Mastery In Servitude" is interpreted very broadly by his followers.

Concerning the field of transpersonal psychology in general, my impression is that very little has been written addressing the need to consider cross-cultural issues when doing transpersonal psychotherapy. My feeling is that the major transpersonal writers would say that multicultural awareness is extremely important to therapists. They would probably justify the lack of attention they paid to this issue by saying that in order to get the field up and going back in the late sixties and early seventies, they needed to focus on the issues and themes that most defined the new discipline. After all, the idea is that transpersonal psychology also incorporates within its domain the lessons of more mainstream psychology and counseling, including all the multicultural writings that have been produced over the past several decades. At the same time, however, it has now been thirty years since the formal onset of the field of transpersonal psychology, and still very little has been written to address the concerns of ethnicity, gender or even religious and spiritual diversity when engaging in transpersonal counseling. Clearly, in this regard, there exists a vacuum in the field.

It seems reasonable to surmise that the lack of attention given to cultural diversity could be that with its focus on transpersonal experience, including transcending the personal ego, the field has neglected the importance of first recognizing the need to develop a strong and integrated ego from which to transcend. While very little has been written concerning multicultural issues, some transpersonal writers (Boorstein, 1996; Cortright, 1997; Vaughan, 1995; Washburn, 1988; Wilber, 1977) have addressed the need for individuals to strengthen the personal ego. In this sense, “ego strength is seen to be a prerequisite to transcendence” (Strohl, 1998, p. 398). For instance, in discussing the goals of both Buddhist meditation and psychoanalytic object relations theory, Engler (1993) talks about the importance of forming a strong and integrated ego:

But one has to be somebody before one can be nobody. The issue in personal development is not self or no-self [transcendence], but self and no-self. Both a sense of self and insight into the ultimate illusoriness of its apparent continuity and substantiality are necessary achievements. Sanity and complete psychological well-being include both, but in a phase-appropriate developmental sequence. The attempt to bypass the developmental tasks of identity formation and object constancy through a misguided spiritual attempt to “annihilate the ego” has fateful and pathological consequences (p. 120).

In this regard, it seems to me reasonable to assume from a transpersonal perspective, that if healthy identity formation is a prerequisite to transcendence, and part of that identity development is incorporating a sense of oneself according to gender, ethnicity, religion

and any other dimension felt to be important to the individual, then focusing on multicultural awareness should be an important concern for the field of transpersonal studies. Again, more attention should be given to this aspect of transpersonal counseling.

Regarding my experience as a new researcher, I found this study, including both the subject matter and process, to be a highly instructive and enjoyable way to be initiated into qualitative research. I was given the advice early on when planning this dissertation to choose a topic in which I am really interested and that would help further the field of counseling. I found this advice to be quite valuable as there was really never a time during the project that my interest waned or that I wanted to go in some other direction, a predicament from which some of my classmates have unfortunately suffered. At the same time, there were periods when I struggled internally with a dialectic between just wanting to get the thing finished and remaining open to new learnings as the process unfolded. Most of the time, I succeeded in allowing myself to get absorbed in the step by step development of the research.

It was also a pleasure doing the interviews with these therapists. While I knew two of them fairly well, one I did not know at all prior to our interview. Regardless, I felt tremendously inspired by each of them as they openly and lovingly spoke about their lives. They poured out some of the most intimate details of their inner lives, not so much their personal lives, but rather their spiritual lives – which is really the foundation of who they are as people. It was a privilege to hear these things and to also understand the ways they take their interior lives and apply them in the world through their work.

As I am very personally interested in this topic, the analysis of data went smoothly and comfortably. When I first envisioned this project, I thought of approaching it from a quantitative perspective, using surveys or other tools. However, it quickly became apparent (especially through the suggestions of my committee) that a qualitative approach was more appropriate for what I wanted to accomplish. In this case, form follows function. What I really wanted to investigate and demonstrate had to do with meaning – the meaning these therapists give to their lives. Clearly qualitative research was the form needed.

Through the progression of this study I've come to a conclusion that this general method of research fits my personality rather well, certainly much more so than quantitative research. I tend to be a person more interested in questions of meaning and purpose. I have spent many years developing my own spiritual life and I have also studied religion and philosophy in graduate school in the past.

Personally, I found the systematic study of these therapists a surprisingly affirming exercise. I didn't anticipated being personally touched by the experience. Looking back, perhaps I assumed that since I am engaged in the same spiritual path as the participants, I unconsciously felt I knew what to expect. However, beginning with the first interviews with Sam, I realized that I was very moved by the experiences they were sharing with me. Their themes of love, surrender, grace, remembrance and service are among my own themes – those upon which I build my own inner life. Most of all, as they spoke, they were evoking in me an experience and understanding of our spiritual lives

that we have in common. I very much identified with the insights and struggles they spoke of based on years of authentic spiritual seeking.

Also, being with these psychotherapists affirmed my decision to be in this field. The creative and varied ways they each approach their work was a fascinating and intimate view into the experiences of three seasoned professionals. I learned a great deal from each of them as they spoke about how they approach their work and how important it is to include spirituality in the therapeutic setting whenever appropriate.

In my view, this study overwhelmingly confirms the initial impetus for the project: the vital importance of including both bhakti and karma paths which are at the heart of transpersonal literature. While some mention of these paths has appeared in the literature, including Anthony's (1987) clear and engaging descriptions of following Meher Baba, incredibly, very little attention has been given to these highly consequential and widespread approaches to spiritual living. The experiences of these practitioners, in their personal as well as professional lives, have both validated and clarified the uniqueness of these paths.

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APPENDIX A
Interview Guides

APPENDIX A

Interview Guides

Interview #1

The purpose of the first interview will be to establish rapport with the participant and to begin a dialogue about how they view their own spiritual life. The overarching concern is: How have your spiritual experiences impacted your personal life?

- A) How did you enter into your spiritual life?
- B) Describe the spiritual practices you engage in as a regular part of that life?
- C) Talk about the ongoing effect of these practices on your daily life.
- D) Describe the daily experience of your spiritual life.
- E) Describe your relationship with your spiritual master. Are there any stories about his life or things he has written that are particularly important to you in that regard?

Interview #2

The purpose of the second interview is to explore the professional life of the therapist, and to discern what influence their spiritual life has on the way they conduct their professional practice.

What has impact of the participant's spiritual experiences, including their ongoing practices (bhakti and karma) been on their professional psychotherapeutic practice?

- A) Describe your training as a therapist, including your supervision, and the theoretical writings that were most important to you during your therapeutic education.
- B) What is the nature of your psychotherapeutic practice?
- C) In what ways is your practice different now that you've become a transpersonal therapist?
- D) How would you describe your clients?
- E) Do they tend to have a spiritual focus in their life? Do you work with them on that level?
- F) Discuss how your spiritual life has influenced your psychotherapeutic practice. Do you see your frame of mind as helping shape the context of the therapy? If so, in what ways?
- G) Discuss the degree to which the understanding and wisdom you've

gained over the years as a practitioner is the result of a natural accumulation of life's wisdom gained from normal maturation or as the result of spiritual insight.

H) How does your therapeutic practice influence your spiritual life?

APPENDIX B
Human Subjects Proposal

Proposal for Research Involving Human Subjects

Edward H. Connor

I. General Description of Research Project

A. Research Questions

The expanding field of transpersonal psychology is providing a much needed link between the field of psychology and the variety of human ‘transpersonal’ experiences normally associated with the world’s spiritual and religious traditions. A review of the most influential transpersonal literature of the past twenty-five years reveals the relative absence of two of the most important and common spiritual practices or ‘paths’ found in the world’s religious traditions: bhakti and karma. This research study proposes to examine the following question: What is the effect of the spiritual approaches associated with bhakti and karma practices on the personal and professional lives of three practicing psychotherapists?

The purpose of this study is to discover the impact of both the bhakti and karma

practices on the lives and work of three practicing transpersonal psychotherapists, based upon their self understanding. It is envisioned that this information will be useful in beginning to develop an understanding of the effects that both bhakti and karma practices have on people's lives, as well as the therapeutic applications such practices may have in psychotherapeutic settings.

The assumption of this research project is that the inclusion of bhakti and karma traditions in the theory and practice of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy is vital to a more complete understanding of transpersonal experience and therefore transpersonal psychology. Ultimately, this information is intended to contribute to theory building in the field of transpersonal psychology regarding the impact bhakti and karma practices have on an individual's psychological well being.

The researcher proposes to investigate two broad or 'grand' questions. As this research design is qualitative in nature, it is concerned with how the participants being studied assign meaning to experiences they have in their lives (Bogdan & Bilken).

1) What has impact of the participant's spiritual experiences, including their ongoing practices (bhakti and karma) been on their personal life?

2) What has impact of the participant's spiritual experiences, including their ongoing practices (bhakti and karma) been on their professional psychotherapeutic

practice?

(B) Methodology

This study will utilize a qualitative design approach. Qualitative research is concerned with ways people make ‘meaning’ out of their lives, how they see things from their own unique point of view (Bogdan & Bilken). It is descriptive in nature and focuses on the intensive study of specific subject areas (Gall, Borg & Gall). That is, the data collected is in the form of words that describe how the participant understands the topic being investigated.

This means that qualitative researchers study things in their own natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2).

As this study is concerned with the self-understanding the three selected transpersonal therapists place upon their own spiritual and professional lives, qualitative research is a particularly suitable design. The primary methodological tool will consist of a case study approach, in this instance multiple case studies, using semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interview process has been traditionally used to explore a few general topics in order to uncover the participants’ own meaning and perspective, while at the same time respecting how the participants frame and structure their responses

(Marshall & Rossman).

Additionally, this study will utilize an analytical inductive method in analyzing the data (Creswell). The researcher will use both within-case displays to draw out prominent themes, and cross-case displays to scrutinize the data for similarities and differences between participants (Miles & Huberman). ‘Member checking’, a process used to verify the information with the participants, will be employed to confirm the accuracy of the data from the interviewees point of view. Next, the researcher will synthesize the categories of beliefs and behavior of the participants into themes in order to generate a picture of the influence that bhakti/karma practices have had on interviewees personal and professional lives. Finally, the results from this analysis will be matched with the pertinent and appropriate categories found in current transpersonal literature. This process is intended to lead to supporting the development and articulation of a complete theory of bhakti/karma practices in transpersonal literature.

(C) Benefits of the Research

It is the assumption of this project that countless individuals, including trained therapists as well as those seeking psychotherapeutic help, experience what have come to be described as transpersonal states or experiences. In the literature of both developmental psychology (Gilligan, Kegan) and counselor development (Stoltenberg) a case has been made to support the contention that higher levels of self awareness in

individuals (in this case psychotherapists) is a desirable goal. It is the belief of this researcher that both the recognition and to some degree the development of transpersonal self-awareness would be advantageous to counselor growth and development.

(D) Potential Risks to Subjects

Potential risks to participants are designed be minimal in this project.

Interviewees will be fully informed about the nature of the project as well as their option to opt out at any time. Also, the names of the participants will be changed in the dissertation narrative, and participants will be given an opportunity to comment on and change the interview data collected. Given that the number of participants is small (3) and that they are highly educated adults, the researcher anticipates a low level of risk to interviewees.

II. Interview Questions

Interview #1

The purpose of the first interview will be to establish rapport with the participant and to begin a dialogue about how they view their own spiritual life.

How have your spiritual experiences impacted your personal life?

- A) How did you enter into your spiritual life?
- B) Describe the spiritual practices you engage in as a regular part of that life?
- C) Talk about the ongoing effect of these practices on your daily life.
- D) Describe the daily experience of your spiritual life.
- E) Describe your relationship with your spiritual master. Are there any stories about his life or things he has written that are particularly important to you in that regard?

Interview #2

The purpose of the second interview is to explore the professional life of the therapist, and to discern what influence their spiritual life has on the way they conduct their professional practice.

What has impact of the participant's spiritual experiences, including their ongoing practices (bhakti and karma) been on their professional psychotherapeutic practice?

- A) Describe your training as a therapist, including your supervision, and the theoretical writings that were most important to you during your therapeutic education.

- B) What is the nature of your psychotherapeutic practice?
- C) In what ways is your practice different now that you've become a transpersonal therapist?
- D) How would you describe your clients?
- E) Do they tend to have a spiritual focus in their life? Do you work with them on that level?
- F) Discuss how your spiritual life has influenced your psychotherapeutic practice. Do you see your frame of mind as helping shape the context of the therapy? If so, in what ways?
- G) Discuss the degree to which the understanding and wisdom you've gained over the years as a practitioner is the result of a natural accumulation of life's wisdom gained from normal maturation or as the result of spiritual insight.
- H) How does your therapeutic practice influence your spiritual life?

III. Letter of Informed Consent (see APPENDIX C)

IV. Participants

Participants will consist of three practicing psychotherapists who are self-describe as followers of bhakti/karma spiritual practices. The interviewees must have worked as a psychotherapists for at least ten years, and additionally have been involved in their spiritual practices for at least ten years. The participants will be recruited directly by the interviewer by phone. As the interviewer has many connections with practitioners of bhakti/karma spiritual practices, he does not anticipate much difficulty in recruiting interviewees.

Interviewees will not be paid. And upon completion of the dissertation, participants will be informed that they may have a copy of the dissertation, furnished by the interviewer at no cost, if they so request.

V. Explanation of Precautions

5(d) Will the research involve invasion of privacy form potentially sensitive or personal questions?

As mentioned in the letter of informed consent, the researcher will make every effort to maintain the interviewees confidentiality and anonymity by changing any identifying personal characteristics (including their name) that might lead to their being

recognized. Also, every aspect of the project will be supervised by both my faculty advisor, who is one of the co-chairs of the dissertation committee, and the other co-chair.

APPENDIX C

Letter of Informed Consent

APPENDIX C

Letter of Informed Consent

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project as part of a doctoral dissertation conducted by Edward H. Connor entitled, “The Effects of Bhakti and Karma Transpersonal Practices on the Personal and Professional Lives of Selected Transpersonal Psychotherapists.” The study will be conducted through the College of William and Mary under the direction of Chas Matthews, Ph. D., and Jill Burruss, Ph.D., co-chairpersons (757) 221-2340.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of bhakti and karma spiritual practices on their personal and professional lives of selected psychotherapists. Two semi-structured interviews will be held with each interviewee. The interviews will be approximately 90 to 180 minutes in length. Each interview will be audio taped for later transcription. This method permits thorough evaluation and analysis of data. Participants will be given an opportunity to check the transcriptions for accuracy.

Risks and Procedures: If you choose to participate in this study all reasonable efforts will be taken to decrease any risk to you. Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Although potential psychological risk is minimal the names of appropriate therapists will be made available to you if necessary.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: Individual privacy will be maintained for all subjects in the written material resulting from this study. Identifying personal characteristics that might lead to recognition will be changed. However, there can not be a one hundred percent guarantee someone would not recognize themselves or some other participant in this study. Only the principal investigator and the Dissertation co-chairpersons will have access to the identities of the participants. Audio tapes will be destroyed after the analysis of data is completed for the dissertation.

Voluntary Participation: Although your participation in this study is greatly appreciated, your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time. Additionally, you have the right to refuse to answer any question (s) for any reason.

Questions or Concerns: If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview sessions, please contact either Chas Matthews (757-221-2340) or Jill Burruss (757- 221-2361) at the College of William & Mary.

Exceptions to Confidentiality: There are exceptions to the promise of confidentiality. If information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities. In addition, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the College of William & Mary might not be able to avoid compliance with the order of subpoena.

I have read and understood the descriptions of the study to be conducted by Edward H. Connor. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I may withdraw my consent to be a part of the study at any time. I also agree to be audio taped. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature

Date

**A CASE STUDY OF THREE TRANSPERSONAL
PSYCHOTHERAPISTS AND THEIR
BHAKTI AND KARMA APPROACHES TO
TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY**

EDWARD H. CONNOR

ABSTRACT

The expanding field of transpersonal psychology is providing a much needed link between the field of psychology and the variety of human ‘transpersonal’ experiences normally associated with the world’s spiritual and religious traditions. A review of the most influential transpersonal literature of the past thirty years reveals the relative absence of two of the most important and common spiritual practices or ‘paths’ found in the world’s religious traditions: bhakti and karma.

The purpose of this study was to discover and explore the impact of both the bhakti and karma practices associated with following a spiritual path dedicated to the late 20th century spiritual personality Meher Baba on the lives and work of three practicing transpersonal psychotherapists, based upon their self understanding.

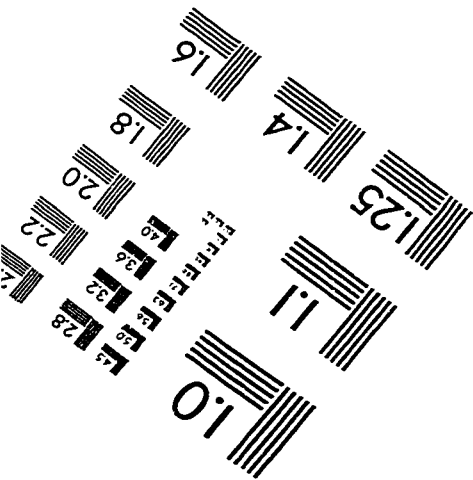
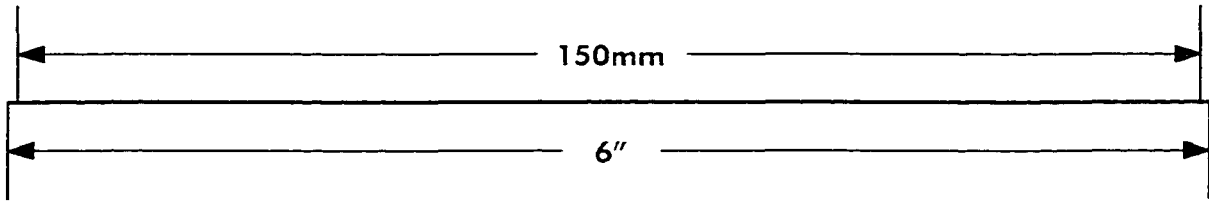
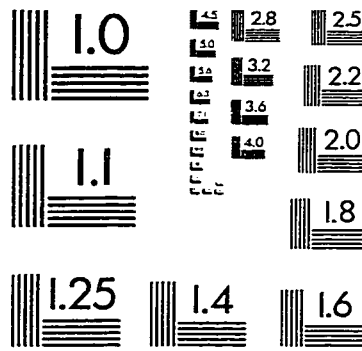
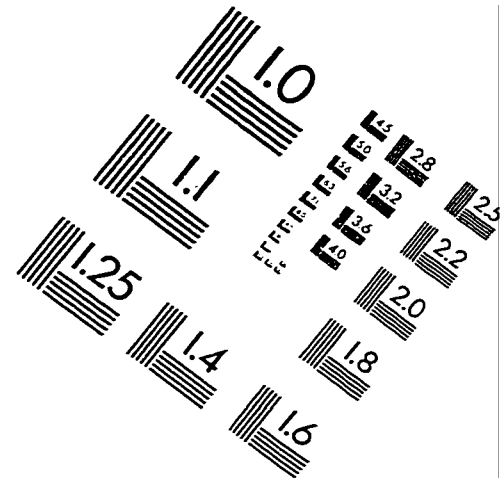
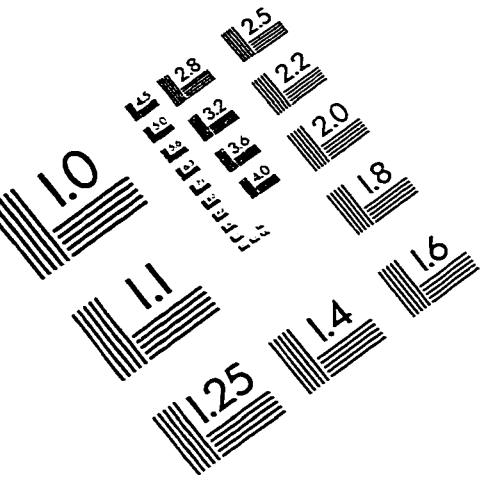
The primary methodological tool consisted of a multiple case study approach using multiple semi-structured in-depth interviews. In addition, this study utilized the constant comparative method in analyzing the data constructing both within-case displays

to draw out prominent themes, and cross-case displays to scrutinize the data for similarities and differences between participants. The technique of member checking was also employed to verify the accuracy of the data from the interviewees' point of view.

Research findings demonstrated that the interviewees' personal and professional lives are rich in transpersonal experience. It was evident that in their professional lives each of the psychotherapists are transpersonally oriented in their therapeutic work, in how they provide a context for such work to occur and in some of the techniques they use.

The assumption of this research is that the inclusion of bhakti and karma traditions in the theory and practice of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy is vital to a more complete understanding of transpersonal experience and therefore transpersonal psychology. Ultimately, this information is intended to contribute to grounded theory building in the field of transpersonal psychology regarding the impact bhakti and karma practices have on an individual's psychological well-being. In addition, such a theory is intended to have an impact on counselor education by focusing attention on the importance of including the spiritual dimension of people's lives within the therapeutic setting.

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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