
Very little has been written about the relationship between Transpersonal and Behavioral Psychology. *The Integrative Helper* attempts to fill this gap by providing a practical overview of several basic dynamics of human behavior viewed through the lens of Eastern, Transpersonal, and Behavioral theory.

The first of six parts provides an overview of the frameworks and concepts on which Mikulas’ integrative model is based. Inspired by Buddhist philosophy and Ken Wilber’s Integral Psychology as well as Behavior Modification, Mikulas developed Conjunctive Psychology, which provides the foundation for his integrative approach to therapy. The premises of Conjunctive Psychology are: (a) the integration of a wide variety of existing knowledge, (b) the acknowledgment of four distinct developmental levels of being: biological, behavioral, personal, and transpersonal, and (c) the emphasis on a practical model that recognizes the interactions across all levels of being. In contrast to what Mikulas calls North American Mainstream Academic Psychology (NAMAP), Conjunctive Psychology emphasizes the inclusion of the transpersonal as well as the biological and behavioral.

The term transpersonal is here understood as “the processes of consciousness, and eventually consciousness per se as an aspect of the fundamental ground” and “the dynamic forces that produce a sense of self, the field in which various selves may arise, and domains of being which are not self-centered” (p. 155). Throughout the book, transpersonal concepts, such as altered states of consciousness, mindfulness, and spiritual emergency are introduced and described relative to their developmental level. For example, spiritual emergency is termed personal reality emergency, as Mikulas considers it to be mostly experienced on a personal level of development as challenges to “one’s values or sense of self” (p. 119). Similarly to Ken Wilber in his Integral Psychology, Mikulas makes Transpersonal Psychology a subset of Conjunctive Psychology, emphasizing the relationships between the transpersonal and other levels of being (e.g., biological, behavioral, and personal aspects).

The remainder of the book provides extensive and concrete descriptions of the role of the integrative helper. Mikulas emphasizes the importance of the helper’s own personal growth and the ability to make clear distinctions between the four levels of being and their interrelationships. He points out that failure to accurately determine the level where clients’ challenges originate leads to a level error, or “the tendency to overemphasize interventions at one level to the exclusion of all others” (p. 42). The subsequent parts of the book therefore describe each level of being and its factors and variables.

Part two discusses the influence of variables such as genetics, biological cycles, pollution, and drugs on human behavior and complements its claims with brief summaries of research. Furthermore, Mikulas introduces biobehavioral
therapeutic interventions appropriate for the biological level, such as bodywork, nutrition, relaxation, and breathing. In part three, Mikulas introduces variables of the behavioral level (e.g., operant learning, respondent conditioning) and what he calls “behaviors of the mind” (p. 85), which “are the processes that select and construct the contents of the mind and that provide awareness of these contents” (p. 105). These behaviors are considered crucial factors in clients’ pathology and wellbeing and can be altered through Behavior Modification. Part four examines variables and treatment considerations of the personal level (e.g., consciousness, perception, self-control, and motivation) primarily from a behavioral perspective. Part five describes aspects of the transpersonal domain (e.g., knowing, development, and levels of consciousness) as well as spiritual treatment considerations. Based on the comparison of spiritual practices of the major world wisdom traditions, Mikulas names four universal practices: quieting the mind through concentration, increasing awareness through mindfulness, reducing clinging behaviors of the mind, and opening the heart.

Since The Integrative Helper was written primarily as a textbook for college-level courses, it is ideal for beginning practitioners who are interested in pragmatic suggestions for providing behavioral psychotherapeutic treatment. Questions after each chapter engage the reader in making the material meaningful and applicable. What may make the book valuable to other mental health audiences is its unique contribution of examining the relationship between behavioral and transpersonal or spiritual phenomena from a psychological perspective. However, given its primarily behavioral outlook, it is likely that valuable phenomenological and interior (individual and collective) aspects, practices, and interventions of Transpersonal Psychology do not receive sufficient attention. Furthermore, although in many ways Conjunctive Psychology is highly reminiscent of Ken Wilber’s Integral Psychology (e.g., emphasizing a comprehensive, integrative, and developmental perspective, as well as the inclusion of spiritual and transpersonal considerations), the review of empirical evidence in the discussion of the biological and behavioral levels of being are a unique and interesting contribution to the literature on Transpersonal Psychology and the field of psychology as a whole.

The Author

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Book Reviews
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