

"Projects of Transcendence" at ITP

by William G. Braud

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Abstract

This brief article describes the whole-person, experiential educational approach of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, a graduate school that offers doctoral and master's degrees and certificates in programs emphasizing transpersonal studies, psychology, and spirituality.

Article

I fully agree with, and heartily endorse, the views on alternative higher education expressed by Ruth Crocker in her article, "Education as a Project of Transcendence." In fact, the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (ITP), where I am a core faculty member, was designed with just such views in mind. ITP's mission is not only to provide academic training and leadership in the field of transpersonal studies, but also to provide opportunities for deeper forms of learning, insight, and personal growth in its students, faculty, and staff. Key words and concepts at the Institute are *integral*, *complements*, and *balance*. A whole-person approach to a fuller and more meaningful education is present in each of ITP's programs—a residential Ph.D. program, an evening M.A. program, and an at-a-distance Global program, which provides master's and certificate trainings. The programs do not limit themselves to intellectual content alone, but involve the students in classes and other opportunities that foster awareness and development of body, emotions, spirit, creative expression, and relationship and community. Echoing the views of Colaizzi and Wulff (expressed in Ruth Crocker's article) ITP believes that richer and more profound learnings and insights are possible when experiential, personal, and meaningful dimensions are added to conventional informational presentations, and when complementary or alternative forms of knowing, being, and expression are recognized and emphasized. Students are encouraged to experience, assimilate, and integrate what they learn at as many levels as possible. In this way, they not only learn new things, but experience profound changes as well—some of these sufficiently great as to qualify as transformations and instances of transcendence.

Profound learning is honored at the dissertation level, as well. Here, students pick research topics of great personal meaning and relevance, and explore these using balanced quantitative and qualitative research approaches. In the qualitative approaches, especially, the usual distinctions and boundaries between research, clinical and other practical applications, and psychospiritual growth and development tend to melt and disappear. Research sessions provide gains in knowledge, but they also serve as opportunities for participants to become more aware of, work on, and assimilate personal

and spiritual issues (because of the meaningful nature of the topics studied), and—because the researchers themselves are involved in, rather than distanced from, their projects—they serve as opportunities for the researcher's own growth, development, and transformation. The hope is that the research reports may foster similar transformation in the readers of the dissertations, in the field at large, and—ultimately—in society and culture itself. Those at ITP have rich histories of what Rhea White has termed *exceptional human experiences* (EHEs), and many students report that their educational experiences and their dissertation work at ITP are themselves EHEs and projects of transcendence!

William Braud is Professor and Research Director at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, California. He is also Dissertation Director, and Co-Director (with Professor Arthur Hastings) of the Institute's new William James Center for Consciousness Studies. Information about the Institute's programs may be found at: <http://www.itp.edu>.

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