

Altered States of Consciousness as
Transformational Coaching Tools

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Abstract

All human beings have phenomenological experiences of states of consciousness that are directly available under various circumstances; some ordinary states are waking, dreaming and deep sleep. An altered state is defined in relationship to having an altered state of mind, where there's a significant different change of the normal waking state or beta wave. According to integral theory all human beings are capable of experiencing altered states regardless of the level of development, while the interpretation of the state will be according to the person's worldview (Wilber, 2006). The capacity to experience altered states as part of the human condition has relevancy in the possibility of using altered states practices as tools in the process of self-realization or self-transformation. The usefulness of altered states is related to facilitating a space where you find your Self by stepping back out of yourself. In this experience a person has the possibility to awaken temporarily to the core source of their being, while the ego stays in the background. Once back in an ordinary state, integrating the meaning of the experience is an important part of the developmental process. In this mixed method integral research I propose that altered states are valuable tools to bring about transformation when integrated into an integral method of personal development.

Key words: Altered states, transformation, coaching, integral theory, mixed method research, shamanism, and spirituality.

Altered States of Consciousness As Transformational Coaching Tools

Have you ever experienced a moment in which you are completely aware; you feel as if your heart expanded to embrace all that surrounds you; your whole being feels congruently aligned to a greater natural force; there's a profound stillness filled with silence; and a clear transparent dimension arises where time does not exist and you exist in oneness with everything? These qualities are found in an altered state of consciousness, whether induced by meditation practices, yoga, breathing practices, psychedelics, shamanic drumming, dancing, chanting, etc. An altered state is defined in relationship to having an altered state of mind, where there's a significant different change of the normal waking state or beta wave. It is important to notice that altered states can be experienced to different intensities. The intensity is partly based on the person's sensibility, context, type of state and how the state is induced. All human beings have phenomenological experiences of states of consciousness that are directly available under various circumstances; some ordinary states are waking, dreaming and deep sleep.

According to integral theory all human beings are capable of experiencing altered states regardless of the level of development, while the interpretation of the state will be according to the person's worldview (Wilber, 2006). The capacity to experience altered states as part of the human condition has relevancy in the possibility of using altered states practices as tools in the process of self-realization or self-transformation.

States of consciousness are temporary and exclusive, meaning that you can't experience two states at the same time, for example be in a dream state and deep sleep state at the same time. Even though all states are temporary, some research studies have empirical evidence on how a person with extensive state training is able to stabilize and plateau in an altered state of consciousness for a longer period of time (Wilber, 2006). The usefulness of altered states is related to facilitating a space where you find your Self by stepping back out of yourself. In this experience a person has the possibility to awaken temporarily to the core source of their being, while the ego stays in the background. Once back in an ordinary state, integrating the meaning of the experience is an important part of the developmental process. Since individuals are at different stages of development interpret within a certain structure, facilitating a healthy integration is a

creative process that might require following certain practices and the support from professionals experienced in personal development.

It is important to explore how altered states of consciousness support personal development for the following reasons:

- Altered states are innate in each human being and arise naturally.
- Altered states provide us with a possibility to loosen the structure of our own paradigm.
- Transformation is possible when there is a movement of subject- object perspective and altered states provide an opportunity to experience this.
- Temporary dis-identification from the ego is possible through altered states which allow relaxation of the self into being.
- Altered states provide inspiration and motivation since they can show a bigger picture of life.

Transformation is part of the evolution of life, as human beings we experience the unfolding of various stages of development throughout our lives. When we are young children development happens without much conscious effort while when we become adults transformation requires our intention, motivation and effort. In adulthood many times we find the need to change our perspective of the world that causes suffering and limits us in continuing our path. Transformation entails that we disidentify with old patterns while integrating meanings into a new worldview allowing us to deepen into the discovery of our true self. This is not an easy journey without suffering, since there's the illusion of dying related to the ego's attachment to the current perspective or worldview and the ego's survivalist tactics. The ego is relentless in attaching constant meaning and identification to our everyday living, becoming aware of this is an important step towards transformation.

Transformation during adulthood is not a smooth process and sometimes requires the support from a professional that supports us through the change, whether we choose a guru, spiritual teacher, psychotherapist, coach, etc. Some of these facilitators of change use methods that include altered states of consciousness techniques like meditation, yoga,

holotropic breathing, Processwork¹, shamanic drumming, etc. Part of the facilitator's training must include awareness of the client's worldview and a process to support the integration of the altered state experience into what is needed for his/her personal transformation. Therefore it is important that the experience of the altered state is regarded as medicine but not as a cure so that the client does not relinquish into only using the medicine.

My interest in researching this topic is based on how altered states practices have provided a different perception on viewing the world, a way to take a break from self-image, have sparked my curiosity to feel deeply into the core essence of being and have been an inspirational source for heart openness and closeness to the divine. It is also through the integral theory program that I've had an understanding and embodiment of the multiple aspects of being, including states of consciousness. In this research I propose that altered states are valuable tools to bring about transformation when integrated into an integral method of personal development.

I have been interested in knowing myself and understanding life more deeply since a very young age. Throughout my life my experiences in altered states have supported my ability to connect to my true nature and to further develop spiritually. My journey into awareness unfolded as part of a natural process of transformation through the different stages of development of consciousness based on my intuition. Still before becoming a student of the Master's degree in integral theory my experiences, realizations and insights were not integrated into a structure that helped me organize each aspect. Working with my shadows and leaning into my growing edge are two important aspects of my process of transformation. It is through the process designed in the integral theory program that I progressively organized all the relevant aspects of being and becoming, as studied within Wilber's AQAL approach (Wilber, 2006).

An interest in working with others for personal growth started while being in the integral program, which inspired me to receive coaching training from Integral Coaching Canada (Module 1). Coaching is a method used to support individuals who find themselves at a crossroads, who have tried different approaches to change while still needing the assistance of a coach to continue the much-needed development (Hunt, n.d.).

¹ Processwork developed by Arnold Mindell as part of process oriented psychology.

As a coach, I work within the realm of transformation by being in tune with my intuition, developing skillful means with an intention towards openness to the natural unique unfolding process of transformation of the client and coaching topic. My research question is: *How to use altered states of consciousness inside a coaching model, as a transformative way of working with clients through a coach's access to altered states and by providing/guiding altered states practices to clients?*

A mixed method approach to research my topic is valuable because it uses multiple methodologies, follows a systematic and operationalized framework and generates innovative and effective perspectives by using 1st, 2nd and 3rd person methods while combining the strengths of qualitative and quantitative research from each method and by attempting to minimize the weaknesses. An integral approach to my research means including various perspectives from different methodologies since each “discloses an aspect of reality that other methods cannot” (Esbjorn-Hargens, 2006).

In the concurrent mixed methods study, I will begin with, a phenomenological /autobiographical exploration used to connect between my experience as the researcher and the research topic of altered states based on practices like meditation, yoga Nidra and journaling. After that, I investigate through interviews, the hermeneutic arising of the idea of the use of altered states of consciousness supporting development. The last part of the research consists of conducting a survey to two groups of people (coaches and clients) regarding the relevancy of experiencing altered states as part of a method for personal transformation.

I have carried out this research study for a three-month period, from April 2012 to June 2012, in a manner consistent with the spring quarter of Final Integral Project course required by the master's level of Integral Theory program of John F. Kennedy University, from Olympia, WA, where I currently live. The primary audience for this research paper is individuals who have experience related to altered states of consciousness; those interested in spirituality, psychology, coaching and those who are part of the integral theory community. I have attempted to incorporate definitions of words and particular language used with the intention of providing clarity to the reader about meaning.

Implicit in my research topic and guiding my study are some assumptions related to my idea that altered states support development based on my inspiration and

realizations from experiencing altered states, my personality's characteristics of liking adventure and searching for new experiences, my belief in the evolutionary impulse of life and motivation towards self-realization as a way to live happy in the present moment. Other assumptions are related to my studies inside the integral theory program related to the nature of altered states, spirituality as an important aspect of personal development, the idea of states of consciousness as naturally arising in all human beings and the innate capacity for all human beings to experience our true nature. The last assumption I'd like to mention is related to the belief on the existence of consciousness, God or a divine force that permeates existence and manifests in all living beings.

What follows is a presentation of three methods of inquiry utilized in this study and a conclusion. I have divided the presentation by the main headings of first, second and third person methodologies, with segments for each of the three methodologies. Each of the segments is divided into sections on research design (process, documentation and analysis), research data and discussion.

1st Person Methodology

First-person methodologies bring forth the individual interior perspectives related to altered states of consciousness and transformation. This study employs autobiographical description as part of the phenomenological analysis that is a first-person methodology focused on the connections between the research topic and me (researcher). Phenomenology is used to investigate altered states through enactment of my lived experience. Phenomenological analysis inquiry asks, what is my experiential understanding of the relevancy of accessing altered states of consciousness in regards to my development and transformation? The following sections inside phenomenology consists of research design, research data and discussion about my autobiographical description.

Phenomenological Method and Research Design

To study my subjective experience on altered states of consciousness as part of my personal transformation, I utilized autobiographical description that includes feelings, thoughts, memories, images and emotions. Some of the practices used to explore altered states of consciousness were meditation, yoga Nidra, shamanic journey with drumming,

psychedelics and journaling. The method of autobiographical analysis includes the recollection of information about my life, based on a combination of past and present experiences, memories and knowledge about myself. Utilizing autobiographical analysis reveals my interpretation about altered states in reference to my transformation and illuminates possible bias and assumptions.

The research design entailed inquiry on experiences and interpretations of altered states from past to present; inquiry into past experiences of altered states from previous worldview; inquiry of recent experiences of altered states from current worldview; alignment of altered state realizations with personal transformation; and current intention for exploring relevancy of altered states for change. The practice of inquiry on previous experiences and interpretations involved reading previous journals, interpreting drawings and remembering profound realizations in relation to altered states that were particularly meaningful. The inquiry on recent altered states experiences involved reading journal entries, interpreting drawings and remembering the context and events surrounding the experiences. The alignment of altered states realizations with personal transformation is done by comparing the worldview's meanings from past to present. As for the current intention is to hold an awareness of openness and surrendering to the unfolding of my own transformation within the research project while I inquire into what is the truth at each moment.

Process: From April 8th 2012 to May 25th 2012, I meditated 4 times a week in the morning right after I wake up at my home in Olympia, WA. I practiced yoga Nidra for 20 to 45 minutes once a week and meditation guided by Adyashanti² for 20 minutes three times a week. Yoga Nidra is a guided meditation in corpse pose that takes you between sensory and sleep consciousness, with the purpose of being conscious while going from the waking state, to the dream and deep sleep states. During the Yoga Nidra my Sankalpa (visualized affirmation/intention) is “I surrender to the unfolding of my awakening”. Meditation guided by Adyashanti is focused on resting in primordial awareness from which all objects arise. From April 8th to May 25th I listened to shamanic drumming for 30 minutes to journey once a week with a total of 7 times during that period. On the night of April 13th 2012, I used a psychedelic as part of a ritual with the intention of heart

² Adyashanti is an American spiritual teacher from the Zen and Advaita Vedanta traditions.

openness to the unknown, at my home in Olympia, WA. On May 5th and 6th 2012, I participated in a shaman's workshop (Foundation for Shamanic Studies³) that includes learning the shaman's method to healing and divination through journeying, journaling and sharing experiences.

Documentation: To collect data, I wrote in a journal of the most meaningful experiences related to altered states through the various practices for 30 minutes to 1 hour, describing insights and realizations experienced during or after the practices. I documented current meanings of most relevant past experiences of altered states as described from my journal and drawings. I also documented dreams that were related to the shamanic journeying.

Analysis: I coded the data in my journal entries from past to present experiences by attaching post-its throughout the journals. The coding was divided into insights, induced altered state, dream, realization and shadow. From the coding I organized into categories the ideas and perceptions that arise by reflecting on the orientation of my descriptions by writing them on a notebook. From the categories the themes were developed according to the relevancy in my research question. I analyzed the themes to find patterns, correlating significant realizations to altered states practices, the arising of altered states at different moments, integration of insights from altered states, meaning making of experiences and value of each practice in relationship to my process of development.

Autobiographical Research Data

The data analysis of autobiographical description of my direct experience of altered states as part of my transformation uncovered several key themes: [1] identification of altered states as a part of well being, [2] openness to experience altered states as ability/ capacity, [3] capacity to integrate realizations from altered states of consciousness states related to growth, [4] relevancy of altered states according to worldview, [5] motivation towards greater awareness, [6] shadow work as fundamental for transformation, [7] unfolding mindful living and surrendering to the divine. These themes overlap and interpenetrate each other at times so I address them in similar fashion. My analysis of the data attempts to highlight how these themes shed light into the personal significance of altered states of consciousness as a way to experience the

³ Michael Harner's Foundation for Shamanic Studies. www.shamanism.org

divine and what part those states have had in my personal development thus far. The analysis is described with a flow from past to present experiences with pertinent observations from the different worldviews. The themes show some categories like personality characteristics in regards to openness; worldview in regards to meaning making and embodiment; awareness of states in regards to knowledge and experiencing; and values as importance of well-being and personal growth.

My earliest memory of experiencing an altered state was when intuitively at the age of 12 I started meditating as I laid down very still in my bed at night. I remember listening to music wearing headphones and focusing on my forehead as there was an inner light “pulling” me into that area. Focusing on the third eye opened up a peaceful and quiet place in my mind where time did not exist. An important realization from that practice was that peace resided inside me. After that first experience I continued to practice this until my late teen-age years. In my young adulthood I practiced many exciting sports like riding horses, scuba diving, hang-gliding and surfing. Each of these sports provided a peak state at certain moments induced by different intensities of adrenaline and by being in close contact with nature. My interest in those activities was based on the feeling that would arise of oneness, timelessness, increased awareness and well-being. As I recall, there was a unique instance in which I was surfing and got into the “perfect wave”, at one point the sea, the board, the sunset and I were fused into one sublime expansive experience. Apparently I had an ability of openness towards altered states and identified those states as important for well-being.

The themes of openness, relevancy of experience according to worldview and capacity of integration are apparent in the following description. The reason why I chose the following experience it is because of the profound impact that left in me, even though I was not able to understand at that time through my life I intuitively accepted that it was part of the mystery of life. At the age of 18, I accidentally ingested four doses of LSD. It was my first experience trying any drug and its no use in going into the particularities of how it happened. The experience was mixed with images and sensations that started being fun and bringing a lot of laughter. It was not until a couple of hours later that I got hit with the total experience of the four doses of acid, by then I was at my parents’ home laying in my bed. It is not hard to recall the experience, I closed my eyes and I was

surrounded by an immense vast dark emptiness, suddenly golden dots started appearing after that I saw golden lines that connected between the dots eventually forming geometrical shapes. At that time it seemed like that was the fabric of the universe the dark emptiness was full of golden light. Suddenly I find myself floating in that universe, I experience how it is constructed by my mind. I start realizing that I do not exist, my parents do not exist and that the world I know is only a dream. I do not know who I am anymore, I can't remember my name or what I look like, I have no sense of myself, I am lost in that space. I start wondering if I am dying or if I am going crazy. I open my eyes and find myself back in the world but I still don't know who I am. I grab my dog and lay down with her in my bed for a few seconds I come back to my sense of self...then I'm gone again until it all fades into being asleep. It is important to consider the ability to integrate intense experiences like this one as at that time I had no support or guidance related to what had happened and could explain what it all meant. It is hard to say what was the impact of that experience and the ramifications it had in my life, I believe it left a seed in me to search for greater awareness. Still at that moment I thought it was just a "bad trip" from taking too much, which in a sense it was but a greater meaning of the experience was not present at that moment. The next morning I remember being grateful to be alive. It is until years later that I understood the gift of that experience.

The theme of identification of altered states as part of well-being and the capacity to integrate realizations related to growth are supported in various journal entries but I chose this one because of its rich description and how it still lives in me as a link to vast love emptiness of the Divine. This was recorded after a peyote ceremony in Mexico in the year 1994:

In a moment I found myself softly wrapped in clouds and filled with the color blue. For an instant I heard an eagle close by and I knew that eagle was I. After this my heart was open and filled with infinite happiness guided by a light that came from my crown. I felt the aliveness and presence of the universe and was aware of the eternity of life inside me. I understood the cosmic order of life, its interconnections and the presence of love with absolute certainty. (Journal entry, 1994)

Reading this entry takes me back into a feeling of love and appreciation for life in all its forms as part of a universal wisdom. I recall how that experience opened a window to my inner core love-wisdom and inspired me to go deeper into inquiring, “what am I?” related to the theme of motivation towards greater awareness.

In the following years there’s a search to know my Self that includes meditation, yoga, reading consciousness and spirituality books and a study of Dzogchen⁴. The theme of unfolding mindful living and surrendering to the divine starts to be noticeable in 2005, after being at a Dzogchen retreat with Chogyal Namkhai Norbu and receiving his transmission, there’s a subtle grounding sense of being that is reflected with this journal entry:

We find in each other bits of who we are...when we accept and love each bit...then we get there.

when we see that each reflection in others is just us...then we get there
why are we so afraid to loose all those emotions, thoughts, ideas...because we think that if we don’t have them we don’t exist anymore. (Journal entry, July 2005)

It is around this time that I start approaching altered states with a different intention since there’s recognition of the importance of becoming aware of my personality, my patterns, beliefs and values. A few years later I decide to enroll in the integral theory program (2009) focused on embodying my realizations, on my desire “to walk the talk”. Being in the integral theory program provides various tools to understanding better all the aspects that form my being and reality. In the first year of the program I decide to take the shadow course, some of the practices that I still do are 321-shadow and dream interpretation. During the shadow work process there’s an unfolding of surrendering and allowing pain, grief and suffering to come out. There are many journal entries that reflect the importance of shadow work as fundamental for transformation; this entry is about a dream and its interpretation:

Dream: I am washing a towel under a water tap, underneath I can see the dirt with stones, broken bricks and earthworms. I am standing in the stones without shoes.

⁴ Dzogchen or “Great Perfection” is the central teaching of Nyingma Tibetan Buddhist School.

A man is watching me. Interpretation: I am at a breaking point, healing emotions, ready for a new path and moving forward in my life. I am uncovering the unconscious and hidden aspects of myself. My assertive masculine side is emerging. (Journal entry, winter 2010)

During three months of intensive shadow work I open to the hidden aspects of myself (negative and positive) that need to be accepted and embraced as part of my being. In this embrace energy is freed, humbleness and compassion arise within a strong ground. From the beginning of my conscious journey towards greater awareness (1994) I find a significant difference of my meaning making of altered states in three interconnected continuous flowing waves: opening towards intuition, cognitive awakening and heart awakening. Shadow work allows for the third wave to unfold and there's a strong surrendering feeling that accompanies that. The themes of transformation and unfolding mindful living and surrendering to the divine shape the path that I follow. As part of my shadow work I uncovered a profound feeling of fear of abandonment, that is the base for various aspects of my attitude like lack of trust and fear of attachment. It is in a dream that is repeated two times in the same night that I feel a profound sadness of abandonment, the second time it's repeated as a lucid dream:

There's a baby being held by someone who's going down the stairs, the person starts falling and the baby is falling away from her arms, she yells to the person at the bottom of the stairs (she is my mother). My mother is not able to reach and catch the baby. The baby falls to the stairs. I feel so much anger, pain and sadness. I cry because no one was able to catch the baby, I wasn't able to catch the baby. I wake up crying. (Journal entry, January 2011)

It is later during the study of intersubjectivity as part of the integral theory program (Winter 2012) that I experienced an altered state as an outcome of a stressful and painful situation. There's a big shift that happens after that, this journal entry describes the experience:

I found myself crying inconsolably. The pain was so deep and it had been living inside me for so long, but it was now coming out. I cried with all my being. At

one moment there was a sense of being lost, of dissolved to nothing. I felt so much fear. There was a feeling of falling into an abyss. I was falling inside/through the abyss, until I reached the bottom that was bottomless with no structure. I found myself embraced by peace, love, spaciousness and silence that are my core beingness. I stopped crying and opened my eyes, my perception had changed, I had been living in a dream for a very long time. (Journal entry, March 2012)

As part of the heart awakening wave there's a grounding into my intuition strengthened during the integral coaching training, where I experience the joy and inspiration of observing how my clients develop and how in supporting the space for development my heart opens. I feel aligned to working with others by supporting transformation and understand the uniqueness of each person's path.

An important part of development is embracing those parts of our being that have been set to the side because of how painful they are. Through shadow work there's an opening to those parts that allows for greater and wider acceptance and embracement of all that we experience. As part of the big shift or awakening there is a recurrence of altered states with different intensities, the following description is related to the themes of openness to altered states, integration of realizations, unfolding mindful living and surrendering to the divine:

I am in complete oneness with every thing/being...there's clarity of what happens in my heart, of what I feel, my body senses vibrations with different intensities. I ground myself through breathing and meditating in nature to align to the changes. I am open to intuition, psychic awareness and surrender to what is flowing through me that is beyond my control. (Journal entry, March 2012)

During this transformation there's a rebirth where I find a dis-identification of myself and my agreement with existence shifts. There's a feeling of not knowing, of timelessness, of clarity within and being suspended. I find through Adyashanti's teachings and meditations a supportive environment of that which is unknown and arising in me. It is also through shamanic journeying that I find myself at home. The following journal entry is after a shamanic journey with the use of a medicine plant. The intention

for the ritual is to surrender to the unfolding of my awakening. There's an understanding of different realms within the experience of being a human:

There's a line up of images of my life that are displayed one after another forming a cycle or wheel of samsara. This shows a pattern of suffering that is reinforced over and over by the ego attaching itself to the cycle for survival. I realize how I have been living my life in a dream as my mind keeps running the same structure or program. It was as if I would die if I didn't have that illusory security from living in that cycle. It's sad and liberating to see how I have been lost in that wheel. Part of the cycle is to come to a place of surrendering and finding my core essence. This is an illusion, there's no need to follow a pattern or structure to get to my core essence. 'What is' is beyond mind, thought, images, feelings and patterns. My ally connects me to 'what is', is the energy that guides me towards emptiness and openness from the ground of being, it is the image of a hand that opens with a flower as in giving and lives inside my belly. (Journal entry, April 13 2012)

Shamanism allows me to integrate the images, somatic experiences and cognitive understanding in a creative form that it's expressed with drawings, songs and dancing. It is also through Shamanism that my call to serve others is part of the unfolding mindful living and surrendering to the divine.

It is important to consider the validity claims of my autobiographical description related to my topic and research question. Autobiography is a method within the area of phenomenology that claims validity on the basis of the researcher's capacity to translate her lived experience in a manner that demonstrates integrity, authenticity, honesty, identifying assumptions and vulnerability. Through the collection of data I have strived to demonstrate these qualities to the best of my capacity. It is also important to consider that phenomenology as a method of research is imbedded in the interpretation of the perceptions of the researcher that are intrinsic to the construction of reality.

Phenomenology allows for the reader to situate the perspective of the researcher within the study. As the researcher it is fundamental to become a witness of the phenomenological data since there's an embeddedness in the topic of research that might mislead the researcher to dismiss valuable data. It is within the integrity of my intention

that I shared my phenomenological experience and analysis of the data as something possibly valuable in the area of altered states and transformation. It has also been important to enquire into the relevancy of the data selected, the possible bias related to my interest in evolution as a path, in spirituality and assumptions related to using an integral framework. It is clear to me that my current way of being is based on a belief on evolution; on an underlying void-wisdom-love source that interconnects all living beings; and of my manifestation of life as just one of the infinite possibilities of spirit.

Discussion

Reading through my various journals, observing the progression of my meaning making of the experiences and placing the concepts that I've held of altered states is a creative story I've told myself and still do as part of what has moved me into a particular path. Altered states of consciousness provide inspiration; give a temporary release to the identification of personality and ego; and allow viewing other possible perspectives. Several experiences and realizations have been important in defining the movement of my choices, as floating stepping-stones that get shaped and placed as I go. It is only by looking back that I see the path that I have followed.

Through the process of the autobiographical analysis and my various practices, a perspective has developed regarding my interest in coaching others with the intention to provide support into a way of being that brings happiness. It has been important to realize that altered states are challenging ways to experience the self and that it is important to have the capacity to integrate the realizations experienced in a healthy way. While going through my journals it is evident that sometimes integrating realizations has taken a year or more with the support of other practices like yoga, meditation and shadow work. I believe altered states are important ingredients to loosening the structures of ego and being in touch to other possibilities. Each individual has a unique path, so there are pointers that according to my experience might be useful for others. According to the AQAL constellation⁵ of a person, there are numerous practices in which a one

⁵ AQAL constellation – Joan Hunt's term of a person's unique profile of quadrants, levels, types, states and lines.

experiences an altered state but it is within inquiry and intention that the dimensions of humanity unfold as important understandings or pieces of the puzzle

My particular current level of development according to my last SCTi-MAP⁶ (November 2011) is at the autonomous level, Enneagram⁷ type seven and Upper Right quadrant⁸ orientation (preference of relating with the world) provides insights into how I make meaning of my world, my tendencies, preferences and qualities. Knowing this allows me to be aware on how to balance the way I interpret the world, to lean into my growing edge and search for practices and guidance that support me and challenge me into what is needed for greater unfolding of being and becoming.

During the process of this research there were significant shifts into how I perceive altered states as meaningful tools for transformation. In my data analysis I describe three waves that unfold concentrically, from intuition to a mental awakening to heart awakening. It is the heart awakening wave, that unfolds stronger during the research, that grounds me into a core wisdom of being always already connected to the one, spirit, god, energy source. From this heart awakening there's an embodied surrendering to 'what is' and to letting go of the ego, the identification, the patterns and conditioning to be on the background. A practice of continuous mindfulness and surrendering to each moment grounds me into the already extraordinary reality that is to be a human being. Altered states are present at each moment that I am in oneness with what is, when I look at a beautiful flower, when my friend shares her heart and wisdom, when there's pain because of death and separation, when I enjoy the feeling of the sun in my skin. The concept of altered states as being part of a non-ordinary reality feels like a movement of separation from oneness, as if by differentiating ordinary and non-ordinary states gave us a certainty or knowing into what it means to live and be human. The ordinary and non-ordinary realities are two sides of the same coin; both are

⁶ SCTi MAP- Developmental assessment developed by Dr. Susanne Cook-Greuter.

⁷ Enneagram- Human personality typology method developed by Oscar Ichazo and Claudio Naranjo

⁸ Upper Right quadrant orientation- According to Ken Wilber's Integral Theory's this quadrant is related to exterior of individual (behavior, physical qualities, etc.). The orientation is the inherent preference of individual to relate to the world.

manifestations of oneness or unity. The fear of the unknown is what distracts us from being in touch with unity, oneness and love.

The autobiographical method has allowed me to go deep into previous and current meanings and identifications, to become an observer of the choices and inspirations that have guided me through my journey so far. It has also allowed me to identify my strengths and weaknesses related to developing a coaching method that is based on my own experience and approach. I view altered states as possible ways of accessing other perspectives, of working within the subject-object theory developed by Kegan⁹ while integrating them within the integral coaching method from ICC. I am interested in developing my own coaching approach by including some of the integral coaching method, shadow work, altered states, Enneagram and levels of development. Shamanism and other altered states approaches would be included according to the client's preferences, needs and AQAL constellation. Shamanic voyaging could be used as part of shadow work and introspection by following the images and meaning of power animals, spiritual teachers and healing processes that arise during a journey.

2nd Person Methodology

The second-person methodology brings forth the collective-interior perspectives on the use of altered states as part of healing practices because it reveals the shared ideas, different perspectives and beliefs regarding the impact of using altered states as part of assisting others through change. The second-person method used in this study is hermeneutical analysis of three interviews. Hermeneutics brings together two or more persons into a dialogical process of interpretation of lived experience by focusing the analysis into what is the mutual benefits and impact of the intersubjective experience of altered states. The question form of the hermeneutical method is, what is our mutual understanding of the relevancy of using altered states during coaching and providing altered states practices in facilitating the client's process of transformation? As the previous section, the following section consists of research design, research data and discussion about my in depth interviews.

⁹ Robert Kegan's constructive- developmental theory.

Hermeneutic Method and Research Design

I decided to use the hermeneutic method of in-depth interviewing with a general guide approach to get a better understanding about how altered states of consciousness support the process of transformation by the coach/therapist/facilitator engaging in the altered state and guiding practices with clients. It is through dialogue between two people that each person transforms each other's ideas through continuous interaction (Palmer, 1969). Additionally, there is an internal dialogue in the "hermeneutic circle" in which the researcher continuously has the opportunity to use certain principles and ideas to understand what is heard in the interview. There is a rhythm and movement that happens in an interview and that can be perceived while holding a space of stillness and openness to flow with the unfolding of the creative force at each moment. In an interview method there's a constant interpretation as way of understanding from the researcher and the interviewee, which means that we have to use our preconceptions so that we can speak about the topic. Inside the interview we can observe what thought patterns arise, discover new insights and allow for the dialogue of the "We" to bring its own dimension of knowledge. I will use the general interview guide approach focused on collecting information related to the four quadrants, while focusing the information on the interviewees' personal approach to facilitating healing and use of altered states with the clients. The general interview guide approach ensures that the same areas of information are collected from each interviewee while it also allows for freedom and adaptability inside the conversation (McNamara, 1999).

This method is well suited for my topic because it illuminates my interpretation and that of the interviewees on the use/access and practice of altered states. The use of interviews involves a dialogue and an analysis from the researcher from a 3rd person perspective. The value of a third person approach is the objective insights about the interpretations and perspectives that arise with a second-person method. This method reveals some phenomenological aspects of the interviewees and it is also focused on discussing shared meanings and possible routes for the investigation of altered studies as transformational tools.

I conducted interviews with Leslie Conton, Max Schupbach and Kevin Snorf. Leslie Conton is a cultural/ transpersonal anthropologist and shaman trained at Michael Harner's Foundation for Shamanic Studies. Max Schupbach is an organizational consultant, trainer, facilitator and coach that developed Deep Democracy¹⁰ as a branch of Processwork developed by Arnold and Amy Mindell. Kevin Snorf is a certified coach and coaching trainer with Integral Coaching Canada. The interviews will be conducted over the phone for 45 to 60 minutes using a free conference call system that allows for recording. Each of the interviewees has experience working with others through coaching or facilitating change and use altered states of consciousness to different degrees.

The research design of the interview entails the following: meditating for 15 minutes before the interviews with the intention on focusing on "I am" to bring my awareness to the present moment; sharing my intention regarding my research topic with the interviewees; recording the interview; conducting in-depth interviewing with open ended questions related to the four quadrants while allowing the interview to flow organically; taking notes right after each interview has ended to collect my perceptions; and doing the transcription of each of the interview recordings.

Process: The hermeneutic inquiry involved the following: reading *The Way of the Shaman* and attending a Shaman's Workshop from the Foundation for Shamanic Studies led by Leslie Conton; reading Arnold Mindell's books of *The Shaman's Body*, *Working with the Dreaming Body* and *Processmind*; watching videos of Max Schupbach facilitating workshops and learning about Deep Democracy; and previous experience with Kevin Snorf as a coach from Integral Coaching Canada¹¹. A letter was sent through email to each of the interviewees on the week of April 16 2012 requesting an interview. In the email I requested 45 minutes of their time and gave them a time frame for each one to choose the date/time that works best. The interviews were scheduled from May 3rd to May 5th 2012. I sent an email confirmation to each of the interviewees with a brief description of my project, the purpose of the interview and the number of the conference call service. I developed the interview questions based on integral theory's four quadrant

¹⁰ Deep Democracy Institute, a global leadership institute and thinktank.
www.deepdemocracyinstitute.org

¹¹ Integral Coaching Canada- coaching program www.integralcoachingcanada.com

and some questions were rephrased after receiving feedback from colleagues. I conducted the first interview on May 3rd with Kevin Snorf; the second interview on May 4th with Max Schupbach; and the third interview on May 5th with Leslie Conton. I transcribed the recordings and finally I sent emails to each interviewee with my appreciation for their time and support.

Documentation: As part of the process of collecting data, I transcribed each of the interviews. After the interview is finished I wrote for 30 minutes my thoughts, possible assumptions, insights, observations and new questions that came up.

Analysis: I coded the data from each transcript by attaching post-its with the coding words related to I - interviewee's perspective, WE – intersubjective space, IT – particulars of method, IN- insights and ET – emergent theme. From those codes I underlined the significant sentences and then developed various themes and categories related to each including: similarities and divergences between interviewees' perspectives and methods; interviewee's ability of using altered states in coaching; unique aspects of interviewee's approach; observing patterns inside the interview; possible bias and assumptions; and different intentions for working with altered states based on beliefs. I also coded my notes taken after the interview by attaching post-its with IN- Insights and ET- emergent theme, then I related those to the categories from the transcripts to find possible discrepancies or similarities.

Hermeneutical Research Data

Coding of the interview transcript yielded the categories mentioned above which were distilled into the following themes: [1] altered states as innate abilities in human beings that expand awareness; [2] re-defining "altered states"; [3] ordinary reality is a movement of different states of consciousness with various intensities; [4] willingness to be intimate with the movement; [5] using/facilitating altered states while working with clients; [6] navigating within the client's worldview; [7] presence shared during interview. In the following analysis of the data the themes are elaborated upon as I cite examples from the transcripts, when appropriate themes and categories might be found in the same example.

The theme of altered states as innate abilities and the category of similarities of interviewees' experiences of altered states of consciousness are important characteristics

and starting points to get a sense of each of the interviewees' perspectives. I also found that each of the interviewees has an openness to experience and capacity to integrate which is possibly related to a 2nd tier stage of development, this is evident in these quotes:

“I’ve had several altered states experiences...one of the first times I read Ken Wilber’s *No Boundary*...there is this discussion about what it all means to take away the boundaries of one’s ego and something in the cognitive capacity to open my mind to a perspective that my limited sense of self was...plugged into something greater was actually what gave me a satori like experience... In college I experimented with a little bit of altered states induced by drugs... I would have hallucinations about star wars. And then...my goal became to find the natural high...I would sit on the top of the mountain, I will have this feeling of oneness. Then when I found yoga, yoga really changed it because there was a constant movement into an altered state through breath, meditation.” (K. Snorf, personal communication, May 3rd 2012)

“I am a child of the 60’s, I am from Switzerland...and when the hippie movement came along I had the typical experiences of altered states induced by LSD and pot...I grew up in the mountains, so I always felt like a special sense of timelessness and space-time didn’t quite fitted anymore. So actually when I first took LSD, I sort of felt at home in those worlds...And now I am in this work of Deep Democracy...the idea is that there are three levels that create reality...the consensual reality is linear information...the essence or a sentient level and the dreaming level are altered states that are present in everybody’s life all the time” (M. Schupbach, personal communication, May 4th 2012)

“Well since young I always felt connected to nature and always needed to be in contact with nature. The first intense experience was when I was at the dentist and the dentist gave me some medicine, suddenly I flew out the window... There was an occasion when I attended a women’s gathering that my friend organized, she gave me a tea and I started feeling like I was in an alternate state. So I thought my friend had added something to the tea and I went to talk to her about it because she hadn’t said anything about it to me. When I told my friend she said, “I didn’t add anything we need to talk”. My friend said that that kind of tea only gives an

alternate state to those who have the abilities of a shaman.” (L. Conton, personal communication, May 5th 2012)

The theme of re-defining altered states emerged at different moments during the interviews, even though it was not included as part of the questions, in contiguity with the theme of ordinary reality as a movement of different states of consciousness with various intensities, the following quotes illustrates this:

“You know I like alternate states better than altered states because altered has a connotation of being invasive, aggressive and not enjoyable, so I use the world alternate. I feel that alternate states are fluctuating all the time and it’s hard sometimes to define which is an altered state.” (L. Conton, personal communication, May 5th 2012)

“...altered states are the majority of what we go through, most access, most experiences that we go through are tinted, influenced and carried by subtle altered states and actually everyday our whole night is one big altered state, when we fall asleep and when we dream. We have all these myriad of experiences during the day, every second, that we can access but that we prefer to call them altered states...” (M. Schupbach, personal communication, May 4th 2012)

“Because it’s really hard to force a profound altered state on someone but it’s really easy to help people shift states. So I work more with everyday ability to alter states and ironically in my opinion those everyday altered states are the most profound experiences.” (K. Snorf, personal communication, May 3rd 2012)

The three interviewees’ shared what I’ve called a willingness to be intimate with the movement of states within the ordinary reality, this is important because it shows that each interviewee has an understanding of what transformation entails and the integration of altered states, the following quotes illustrate this:

“When people wake up from their perspectives they are really asked to be ok, to be present with something that could be a little scary and different. It develops a certain kind of presence to be able to switch states and not be triggered and not be thrown off...that’s a particular kind of presence that is hard to train. I’m thinking

about the Buddhist book on the dying and when you are dying, and demons are lying on your skull after you die in the bardo. How do you practice for that? Altered states are a good way.” (K. Snorf, personal communication, May 3rd 2012)

“We (Deep Democracy) has a lot of connection theoretically and practically with Australian aboriginal concepts...the aboriginals call the walkabout, that if you notice these altered states on an on going basis you can start to live like that and then the world will come together, nature will come together and support you in what you do. That’s how I try to live my life everyday.” (M. Schupbach, personal communication, May 4th 2012)

“...part of shamanism is to get into an alternate state and learning to work with the spirits and energies, I also experience alternate states as being around all the time, as being part of the ordinary reality. People sometimes need to experience an alternate state to realize that they are one with nature, when there’s suffering this allows them to connect to life and feel happy.” (L. Conton, personal communication, May 5th 2012)

It was interesting to learn how each interviewee works with altered states within their methods; Snorf’s approach is focused on guiding and providing practices to clients, Schupbach is focused on the intersubjective space and somatic work with the client and Conton’s approach on working with the spiritual world related to nature. These quotes describe aspects of each approach:

“I’ll have them shift their everyday state in life, so the way we talk about in integral coaching, having people move from high energy un-resourceful state to more resourceful low energy state or low energy un-resourceful state to a high energy resourceful state. The other way is by using the gross, subtle and causal states by working with the body, with some people I will have them do Tai Chi or Qi Gong to get more settled in the subtle body or to sit in stillness and meditation for a practice of the causal state.” (K. Snorf, personal communication, May 3rd 2012)

“We have Arnold Mindell’s Processwork approach that frames three levels and says that you can look at it from an information view point...a consensual reality point where information is measurable, then you can say there’s a dreaming level, the subjective experiences that are not measurable but consistent like emotions...on a sentient level...there are quantum flirts, you are walking down the street and you think I wonder what happened to Jonas and then you think, where did that come from, I haven’t talked to Jonas for the last 12 years. You come home and there’s an email from Jonas. We actually have a message that says that here is how they flow and what they do to have an organic intelligence in the background that come more in the forward ground and we have ways of how to facilitate meaning to make that flow easier.” (M. Schupbach, personal communication, May 4th 2012)

“In core shamanism considers that there’s the upper-world, the middle-world and the lower-world, the upper-world is where you find a spiritual teacher which is related to searching for guidance and lower-world is where you find a power animal which is needed for empowerment, both are used for healing. So while journeying you can go to any of the three worlds, the middle-world is our ordinary reality.” (L. Conton, personal communication, May 5th 2012)

As part of coaching or facilitating change it is important to adapt the method and navigate within the client’s worldview, this theme emerged inside each of the interviewees as a skill for working effectively with a client. Here are some quotes that reflect that:

“I’ll give a practice of causal state to a guy who has a lot of meditation practice to do the minimum for 3 weeks and rest in stillness and beingness. So when I work with my clients, I show how they need to be in their practice...the client experiences the state with me and when they have to do their practice, they can relate to how they experienced that state.” (K. Snorf, personal communication, May 3rd 2012)

“So the idea is that any physical symptom is a subtle altered state, so your body is dreaming because you’ve become too normal...so in your everyday life you develop a normal identity and everything that is out of your control, out of your

identity either becomes a mental altered state or a physical altered state in terms of a body symptom. We also think that conflict is an attempt for groups to go beyond normal identities and find new meanings in something more altered. So we start with the experiences of the group, we follow the experience because we know there's the concept of processing behind all the experiences, and depending on how the group wants to frame that and we go along with that...we go along with how you work with the experience.” (M. Schupbach, personal communication, May 4th 2012)

I feel that each of the interviewees was honest and authentic in sharing experiences and practices with a curiosity and interest in my research topic. The last theme is the presence shared during the interview by Kevin, Max and Leslie that related to the inspiration of having significant realizations that guided them into finding their own particular approach through coaching, Processwork and shamanism. In the following quotes each of them shares something unique about their perspectives on how they support others through transformation. Each projected joy towards greater understanding and service, the following quotes are related to this last theme:

“With altered states experiences with oneness in nature or through yoga and meditation...for me they signify that when I'm in that state I know who I am, not like what Kevin is but who I am in the spiritual domain...that's changed my life because I am constantly in development, constantly letting go if Kevin, as my meditation teacher says 'all practices is a practice for dying'. (K. Snorf, personal communication, May 3rd 2012)

“Australian aboriginals have a shamanic culture, like even the language is shamanic, they don't have a tense of the future and the past only the present... So the aboriginals call that the walkabout, that if you notice these altered states on an on going basis you can start to live your life like that and then the world comes together, the nature will come together and support you in what you do...you don't have to develop linear goals...things sort of happen magically and you follow these on an on going basis.” (M. Schupbach, personal communication, May 4th 2012)

“Shamanism is a practice to prepare for death by becoming aware of the aspects and the dimensions of spirits...Soul loss can happen after trauma, the soul splits off in parts, fragments of the soul go into non-ordinary reality with memories, emotions and physical sensations, this allows people to survive trauma. A power animal is a spirit of nature, of the universe, its role is like a transformer of the universal energy into a current that human beings can tap into. The shaman needs to learn how to manage the energy and trust the spirits in guiding the process of healing. (L. Conton, personal communication, May 5th 2012)

Hermeneutic inquiry has similar validity claims as phenomenology related to honesty and integrity. The validity of in depth interview is founded on our capacity as co-researchers to translate our experiences in a way that demonstrates authenticity and vulnerability. In depth interviewing makes validity claims based on the hermeneutic encounter as the coming together of two people with the opportunity to have reciprocity and mutuality. With each of the interviewees there was a feeling of mutual trust and understanding of what altered states are and an interest in transformation and working with others. The sharing of inspiring and intimate moments between each of the interviewees and I contributed to the flow and depth of the interview. Each interviewee shared an interest in my project and on providing their support. There was a resonance during the interview with each of the interviewees and an honoring of our particular paths. I have attempted to interpret each of the interviewees’ experiences and my experience with honesty and as authentic as best to my ability.

Discussion

The intersubjective space of an interview supports the research of a topic because of the investigative nature shared by inquiring and sharing experiential and cognitive knowledge between researcher and interviewee. The simple act of inquiring sets a process in motion from all sides of the “we” space. The researcher becomes a guide and grateful follower with a “clean blackboard” where questions arise while the interviewee is required to be truthful, open to sharing with authenticity. At times the interviewee becomes the researcher of his/her own process and the researcher becomes his/her apprentice.

The three interviewees had a distinctive different approach to living and coaching this made the research richer. Kevin Snorf's approach is based on integral theory, yoga, martial arts and working with individuals. Max Schupbach is focused on process oriented psychology, shamanic cultures and working with groups. Leslie Conton is focused on anthropology studies, shamanism and working with individuals and teaching shaman workshops. It is not easy to discern the quadrant orientation of each interviewee, still if I follow my intuition and observe their preferred approach and conversation with me, it seems that Max Schupbach is mainly oriented from the Lower-Right quadrant and Leslie Conton from the Upper-Left quadrant, while Kevin Snorf shared with me that he orients from the Upper-Right quadrant. I also do not have sufficient data to discern the level of development of each of the interviewees but my sense is that the three of them are at least at a post-conventional stage by their coaching styles. Schupbach's style of coaching is similar to the description of the construct-aware stage, my sense was that he had an ability to adjust to what I needed (during the interview he coaches me to demonstrate his method), and he was an empathetic listener, challenged my ideas and helped me reframe my experience (Cook-Greuter, 1985). Snorf's style felt as the autonomous stage, identified with a desire for respect of autonomy with a concern for individuality and fulfillment (Cook-Greuter, 1985). Conton's style of coaching seemed to be at the autonomous level since she would mention how shamanism is a way to create stories, within paradox and ambiguity and also committed to creating a meaningful life for herself and others around her (Cook-Greuter, 1985). What is important about observing this is how the AQAL constellation is present in the delivery of supporting others through transformation. Each person's unique way of coaching adds more light and color to the big picture. Taking all these in consideration is an important step into developing my own coaching method.

Some of the senses I experienced from each of the interviewee was strong intuition and compassion. Intuition is a strong link into the heart of what matter most for supporting the development of others and of the coaching topic. Each of the interviewees shared the importance of adapting the method to what the client needs, whether it is the language used, practices and motivation. Cultivating compassion is an important part of connecting to the suffering of others and an expression of love. A compassionate

approach to supporting others means sensing what is needed for greater awareness and further development by working for the benefit of others without the interference of our own agendas. A compassionate way does not mean that we only embrace peace but also chaos, development isn't an experience without challenges for the client and coach and we need to embrace all that arises without feeling discouraged or threatened.

During the interviews there were times when I experienced something that needs to be spoken, as if language was not enough to completely express what's unspoken. At times the interviewee would stop to find words or would stay within a subtle state as if that was a way to transmit the core of their experience. I am not sure if it's the subtleness of it or the newness that a person might find challenging to communicate with the available language, as if there's an entanglement that the rational mind cannot discern and the wisdom is coming from the core of their being.

Until now, I've covered a 1st person and a 2nd person methodology to research my question related to how to use altered state of consciousness practices as part of a coaching model. Now, I will cover a 3rd person research approach to investigate how others consider this topic in the integral and coaching groups.

3rd Person Methodology

Third person methodologies focus on the exterior perspectives of altered states experiences of individuals and collective, by studying aspects of behavior and social systems. The methodology used in this research is empirical analysis, a third person approach to third person realities in singular form. Empirical analysis as a method of inquiry focuses on the objective measures of the phenomenon in question, what are the perspectives of individuals about altered states of consciousness as practices integrated in a method for personal growth? The use of a survey as part of empiricist method of research is to find out and measure how individuals relate to experiencing altered states as relevant aspects for personal transformation.

Empirical Method and Research Design

Part of the empirical method is to obtain objective measures concerning experiences of altered states of consciousness and perspectives of individuals through the application of a survey. The purpose of the survey is to collect data from groups of people who are part of the integral theory program (professors and students) and the other group of people that provide coaching from Integral Coaching Canada. The survey to coaches was sent by email on April 29th 2012, by using the website (www.surveymonkey.com) that provides a service for conducting surveys; the link to the survey is attached to the email. Originally the design included a survey to coaching clients but since there was a lack of response from that group and lack of time to wait for more responses, I was not able to use that survey and decided to add a survey that I used for the Integral Research course project conducted in the Fall of 2011 with 14 completed surveys. This survey was conducted to a group of integral theory students and professors ages from 21 or older, regarding their experiences and practices related to non-ordinary states of consciousness. I added this survey because it also gives information of how a group immersed in integral theory perceives and practices altered states. The survey includes 10 questions and was developed in surveymonkey website.

The empirical method through surveys allows me to find similarities and differences from each group by inquiring into personality traits, experiences of altered states, realizations, practices and the importance of having such practices as part of a coaching program. Survey results show how the topic is relevant in the individuals' life. Through the survey I observed the answers related from each respondent that correlate personality characteristics to behavior related to altered states experiences; attitudes and beliefs were also observed through the results.

Process: First I designed a survey with questions including a demographic question of age groups divided into 7 year-frame, based on Rudolph Steiner's theory of 7- year cycles of growth; personality measuring questions related to the Big Five Personality theory; close-ended questions (yes/no) and open-ended essay questions related to personal experiences and perspectives (see Appendix B). After designing it, I inserted it into a template from surveymonkey website. The survey includes an introductory description of the research's focus at the top of the survey with a definition of altered states. The survey is anonymous including 15 questions and all questions require an

answer before moving into the next question. The 15 questions are a mix of multiple choice, measuring and essay questions. I identified the group of certified coaches by first contacting those who I personally (10 individuals) know as being coaches from ICC. Then I also searched in the Integral Coaching Canada website to find people who are certified as coaches (20 individuals). I sent an email letter with an attachment to the link for the survey on April 29th 2012. The survey was available until May 21st 2012.

Documentation: I collected the 12 completed surveys' quantitative data through the website's tools (surveymonkey) by printing charts, reports and tables for the questions that are multiple choice and the measuring type for each group (coaches and clients). I also collected quantitative data by coding the essay responses of the printed surveys for each group according to themes related to similar perspectives, similar descriptions, and possible bias and contrasting responses. After coding the responses I developed a table that informs me of the quantity of the responses to the essay questions from each group. I used the charts and documentation related to the survey of my integral research project conducted in 2011.

Analysis: From the data collected from the survey for Integral Coaching Canada (ICC) coaches I analyzed the quantity of responses related to personality to observe any correlation with the essay response related to experiencing and practice of altered states. I analyzed the quantity of the data from the responses to the close-ended essay questions by YES, NO and MAYBE. I coded the data of the essay questions' responses related to themes that are meaningful for this research topic by indicating the percentage of frequency of a theme in each question. I also organized the data by coding similar themes and the percentage of people selecting or endorsing the themes. The analysis of the data from the survey to Integral Theory (IT) professors and students was correlated when appropriate to the similar questions of the ICC coach survey to find similarities and differences between responses. I compared the responses from the two groups related to openness, belief and altered states practices. It is important to consider that the IT survey results are limited to finding out if individuals considered altered states of consciousness important experiences that increase a person's impulse for greater awareness and it had no essay questions.

Empirical Analysis Research Data

The analysis of the data in the two surveys had a similar and also different approach since the survey to ICC coaches includes more questions and also open-ended questions with essay responses, while the IT professors/students survey are mostly Yes / No questions without essay responses, so the analysis is somewhat limited. Still it is useful to view the similar responses and possible assumptions regarding altered states of consciousness. The majority of the respondents from both surveys were from two age groups 35-42 (25%) and 42-49 (33.3%).

The table below consists of three columns that show the questions and the percentage of the results from each survey, the questions are from the ICC-coach survey with a couple of questions that were almost identical to the IT-professors/students survey (see Appendices B & C). I have only added the two highest percentages according to the responses from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The quantity of responses from each column is from a total of 12 individuals of ICC survey and 14 of IT professors/students. Questions #2 to #6 relate to Costa & McCrae's Big Five personality traits: question #2 is related to openness to experience, #3 related to being efficient /organized, #4 to outgoing/energetic, #5 to friendly/compassionate and #6 to being secure /confident. These questions cannot predict behavior but do allow us to view some personality characteristics that can be correlated to an interest for experiencing altered states.

Question:	ICC Certified Coaches	IT Professors/ Students
2. I am intellectually curious, have an active imagination, adventurous, sensitive to beauty, creative and in tune with my emotions.	75%strongly agree 25% agree	100% strongly agree
3. I have a tendency to be self-disciplined, aim for achievement and for planning rather than spontaneity.	58.3 % agree 33.3% disagree	
4. I am outgoing, feel energized in the company of others and optimistic.	41.66% strongly agree 50% agree	
5. I am interested in people, take time for others and make people feel at ease.	41.66% strongly agree 41.66% agree	
6. I have a tendency to be calm, emotionally stable and free from persistent negative feelings.	25% strongly agree 58.33% agree	
7. It is important to have practices that connect me with deeper truths that provide well-being and harmony and that support me in realizing my highest potentials.	83.33% strongly agree	84.6% strongly agree

Table 1. Empirical Analysis Research Data

A person with an interest and enjoyment of altered states possibly demonstrates characteristics like openness, creativity, adaptability, great physical energy, enthusiasm, strong erotic energy, playful light attitude and spiritual orientation (Riso & Hudson, 1999). The responses to statement #2 regarding openness, show a large percentage of strongly agree response from both groups which could be related to personality characteristics or level of development. Responses to statement #3 related to the idea of conscientiousness, show that almost two thirds of the group agrees to some aspects of the statement, with a third of the group disagreeing. Responses to statement #4 related to being energetic and enthusiastic, show that half of the group agrees with the statement. Responses to statement #5 related to the idea of being compassionate and cooperative, show the same percentage of about 42% for strongly agrees to agree. Responses to statement 6 related to being secure and confident, show that almost 60 percent agrees to some aspects of the statement. It is important to consider that the responses are related to how each person defines the concepts of the statements according to his/her worldview. Finally the statement #7 related to a belief related to an existing deeper truth, self-realization and having practices for harmony, shows a percentage of about 84% for each of the two groups. The high percentage to this last statement is possibly based on the respondents being at a second tier level of development where adults start to realize that the meaning of things depends on a particular perspective and interpretation, even though objects are permanent the meaning making is constructed (Wilber, 2006).

The next table below represents the results related to experiencing altered states with the majority of the IT group having a high percentage in 4 or more times in life and the ICC group a high percentage of a few times a week.

Question:	IT Professors/ Students	ICC Coach
8. How often have you experienced altered states of consciousness?		
1 to 2 times in life	21.4%	
4 or more times in life	64.3%	41.7%
A few times a week		58.3%

Table 2. Empirical Analysis Research Data

The results to question #8 could mean that the group considers altered states in regards of intensity, for (4 or more times) intense altered states and for a (few times a week) less intense altered states, since there's no indication of what type of states they are referring to. In the future this question could add a definition related to intensity of altered states and to have an open-ended part for people to describe.

The following table is related to close-ended questions (yes/no) from the ICC coach survey, since the questions have also an open-ended essay section, question #10 and #15 also include responses that were categorized as maybe because of the wording (depends) used by respondents.

Question:	ICC Coach
9. Do you believe that being exposed to altered states experiences opens a person's perspective of the world?	
	Yes 100%
	No 0%
10. Is it important to include practices of altered states of consciousness for personal development?	
	Yes 41%
	Maybe 59%
	No 0%
11. Do you have practices that include altered states of consciousness (meditation, yoga, drumming, etc.)?	
	Yes 100%
	No 0%
12. Do you use altered states of consciousness as part of your coaching method?	
	Yes 75%
	No 25%
13. Have you noticed a benefit in using altered states of consciousness inside coaching?	
	Yes 84%
	No 16%
15. Do you consider that using altered states of consciousness affects intimacy with the client?	
	Yes 58.4%
	Maybe 25%
	No 16.6%

Table 3. Empirical Analysis Research Data

It is interesting to observe that all of the respondents believed that being exposed to altered states opens our perspective of the world while only 40% considered it important

to have practices of altered states for personal development, and 100% responded as currently having altered states practices.

To form the table below I have transformed the qualitative data of the open-ended essay question responses into quantitative data by counting the times a theme appears in the data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Under the question column there are themes that were most relevant and present in the responses for each question, its frequency has been converted into a percentage, so it shows how many times the themes show up in all the responses, one response might include both themes.

Question:	ICC Coach
9. Do do you believe that being exposed to altered states experiences opens a person's perspective of the world? Why?	
Loosens assumptions about self	41.6%
Stretches awareness of reality	41.6%
10. Is it important to include practices of altered states of consciousness for personal development? Why?	
Focus on client's needs/context/topic	50%
Tool for transcending/including	33.33%
11. Do you have practices that include altered states of consciousness (meditation, yoga, drumming, etc.)? Please describe	
Meditation	100%
Yoga	25%
Dancing	25%
Dreaming	16.6%
Being in nature	16.6%
12. Do you use altered states of consciousness as part of your coaching method? How?	
Recommend practice to client	58.3%
Guide practices with client	17%
Before and while being with client	25%
13. Have you noticed a benefit in using altered states of consciousness inside coaching? Please describe	
Attunement to body	16.6%
Foster self awareness	58.3%
14. What are the contraindications to the use of altered states with clients?	
Client's capacity/stage of development	58.3%
Way to avoid suffering/reality	16.6%
Intensity of altered state	16.6%
No contraindication for coaching	33.3%
15. Do you consider that using altered states of consciousness affects intimacy with the client? How?	

Trust/safe container develops intimacy	16.6%
Intimacy creates we-space and altered state	16.6%
Altered state creates trust and intimacy	58.3%

Table 4. Empirical Analysis Research Data

On question #9 most respondents agreed on the themes of altered states widening an individual's perspective and stretching the boundaries of reality, both capacities related to post conventional stages of development or 2nd tier. On question #10, respondents agreed on the use of altered states depending on client's needs, AQAL constellation, topic and context while some mentioned the ability to move from subject to object as outcome of an altered state practice. On question #11, meditation is a practice followed by all respondents with other physically active practices.

Only 25% of the respondents prepared with some altered state practice before the coaching session (according to responses) while almost 60% recommended altered state practices to clients. Responses to question #14 show a strong focus on the client's level of development related to a capacity to do the altered state practice. From the last question's responses three themes arise: through trust with coach clients develops intimacy, through intimacy between client and coach emerges a subtle altered state and experiencing altered states together (client and coach) creates trust and intimacy.

As for the categories of validity, the survey analysis claims validity based on response and return rate, clear questions in a comprehensible format and measurability. Looking at my ICC- coach survey results within the validity claims, I found that there was a 40% return rate since the survey was sent to about 30 people and only 12 people completed the survey. The response rate was of 100% since no questions could be skipped. The IT professors/students survey had a return rate of 70%, with a response rate of 71%. The controlled condition of the two survey is that they were only directed to people with knowledge of integral theory are knowledgeable of the language and concepts used in the survey. The use of rated responses on a scale of 1 to 4 ensured that the survey was measurable; also the close-ended questions provide measurable information. Overall I feel that the survey follows the validity claims for the empirical method even though a larger return rate would be preferable. It would also be important to conduct a survey to ICC coaching clients to get feedback on how they perceive the use of altered states as transformational practices. The transformation of qualitative data into

quantitative data is based on my interpretation of the language and concepts used by the respondents. Also the interpretation of the data is focused on my perspective within the topic of research. In the discussion below I will go into further analysis of the data collected and acknowledgement of interpretations.

Discussion

The objective of my ICC coach survey was to obtain data that would reveal the personal experience of coaches related to altered states and also if they provide practices for their clients and why or why not. The IT professors/students survey was oriented to obtain information on how altered states were perceived by that group. As stated before, I originally intended to have a survey for coaching clients because this group would provide an important view of the impact of integral coaching. In retrospect, I would do the survey with more time in advance and also have a more ways to find coaching clients to participate in the survey.

Some changes that I would make are the questions related to personality traits are basic and do not necessarily provide the information I need, the statement about openness is valuable in relation to altered states. Other changes would be to have personality questions that do not include so many descriptions that are more focused on what might be related to personality typologies with more tendencies towards experiencing altered states. Possibly more questions that allow me to differentiate levels of development and how each approaches the topic of providing altered states to clients. It is assumed that because the ICC coach group is using and understanding an integral application in coaching that at least they belong to a post-conventional cognitive level. Still the way each coach works with a client is a combination of his/her AQAL constellation so it would be important to include definite questions to get a glimpse on what might be the particular approach on using or not altered states.

The demographic question about age is not necessarily providing much information about the topic or the individuals. My intention was to find that within an age group there's a greater tendency of certain qualities related to the worldview. Steiner develops a theory of development (similar to Piaget's theory of development) by

separating 7-year cycles of a person partly based on the time that all cells in the body are reborn. According to most of the respondents in the surveys there are two groups: 35-42 age group related to adults contemplating what are they doing in their life, observing the ways in which they interact with others, careers and habits to find what needs to be changed or modified; and the 42-49 age group experiences a major change of digesting their life experience until this age (Armstrong, 2008). New ideals and a new direction in life might happen as un-lived aspects arise and there's a desire to leave a mark in the world. It is not so clear from this two descriptions how each respondent makes meaning of having this changes, therefore better defined questions related to development would be of more value. In the future an age group could be better related to characteristics related to individual's culture and current profession or work status, by correlating these three maybe a more accurate sense could be developed about the possible stage of development (egocentric, ethnocentric, worldcentric and higher). Regardless, most of the respondents to the surveys live in a Western society (USA, Canada & Europe) and according to Wilber's statement in his book *Integral Spirituality*, about 40% of the population is at amber (ethnocentric/1st tier), about 50% is at orange (worldcentric/ 1st tier), 20% at green (worldcentric/ 1st tier), and 2% at turquoise (2nd tier) (2006).

Some of the value of the data gathered from both surveys is related to the groups embracing altered states as meaningful experiences to perceive of the self and the world in multiple ways. ICC coach group also recommends altered states practices to oriented according to the needs and capacity of the client. Most coaches provide types of practices related to their ICC training and some add practices like lucid dreaming and shamanic preparations. What's most relevant in the information I gathered is on how to be cautious, to attend to the client's needs and at the same time challenge with compassion within the particular flow of transforming the world and perspective with the clients as needed for their topic.

The empirical analysis of my topic confirmed the relevancy of altered states as meaningful ways to disidentify with personality and ego and possibly to access other perspectives. This important in my research as it is one of the foundations for considering the use of altered states as part of a transformative process. There is also a link between experiencing altered states of consciousness with the personality

characteristic of openness and a belief in connecting to a deeper inner truth not only in the responses to the close-ended questions but also as part of the essay responses. Therefore in considering the use of altered states with a coaching client, I would need to find what's the degree of openness to experiencing and important aspects like culture and religion that would be informing the client as archetypes (within images, visions, dreams, etc.)

Conclusion

A mixed method approach to investigating a topic provides an opportunity to develop a personally meaningful inquiry that includes the various perspectives from a 1st, 2nd and 3rd person. Integral theory includes eight methodologies for research that include a 1st, 2nd and 3rd person perspectives, for this research project I have used only three of the eight possible ways to support or investigate a topic. It is important to acknowledge that some of the concepts and ideas have come from a previous research (“Non-ordinary states of consciousness support development”) that I engaged in through the Integral Research course of the Master’s degree program (JFKU). The investigative nature of a mixed method approach allows for the researcher to become entangled between and inside the findings and outcomes of the methodologies. It is in this final conclusion that I am able to step back and recognize the passion, interest and fascination to be in touch with the truth of the relevancy of my topic, not only for my own personal process of inquiry but also as a hermeneutical shared space and empirical process. Each of the methodologies that I’ve used for this research has provided a unique dimension of how my topic “altered states of consciousness as transformational coaching tools” arises in the world, from the Upper Left quadrant and the Lower Left quadrant according to AQAL¹². In the future, I would like to consider other methodologies not used in this research, to investigate further into my topic.

The phenomenological method that I designed was an important part of the research because it integrates practices of meditation, self-reflection through journaling and different practices of altered states of consciousness. The practices and my deep

¹² AQAL- All Quadrants All Levels from Ken Wilber’s Integral Theory.

inquiry to experience the core meaning of an altered state as part of transformation are aspects that informed my research through each of the methodologies. My own transformation occurred during this inquiry and practices, where I found my view of altered states in a different light. Originally my tendency towards altered states was more as a fascination and relief from my conditioning and personality structure, now I find myself more observant of the qualities, capacities and outcomes of the use of particular altered states. My lenses have shifted, as the self seems to have balanced the various components that emerged through the years that I have experienced altered states. This is important in realizing the integrating creative nature that is part of the process of transformation unique to each individual. It is important to consider Wilber's idea that a person can experience an altered state at any level of development but it depends on how the person integrates or balances the experiences according to what's possible and available for his/her self. A coaching approach that includes altered states of consciousness has to continuously investigate about how the person is balancing and coordinating the self-system with the capacities as identification, will, defense, and tension regulation (Wilber, 2005).

The hermeneutical approach provided important insights into how the use of altered states for transformation should have an appropriate context and ritual according to the intensity of the altered state. Ritual and context are embedded in a belief system that informs and permeates the coach or facilitator and the client. Intense altered states induced by medicinal plants need to be used within a ritual, possibly with a medium size group (10 people) and with leading presence (coach/facilitator) that has knowledge of how to work with groups and with medicinal plants. Less intense altered states are a better fit for working in a one-on-one setting. The images, visions and information accessed through an altered state needs to be referenced to a developmental system that includes the self-sense, conditioning, worldview and archetypes so that it informs the coach and client about what's relevant in regards to transformation process. Finally the empirical analysis informs me that there's greater acceptance (at least in the integral community) into the importance of altered states of consciousness as part of transformation even if there's still much more to develop within a system that has been

predominantly rational-scientific. Most of the respondents only worked with less intense altered states and only a couple mentioned lucid dreaming or shamanic voyaging. Much unconscious conditioning has to be restructured to accept that altered states do not imply a meaning of aggressive or intrusiveness. Still as previously discussed a more in depth survey to different groups would provide more perspectives into the empirical research of my topic.

Integrating the similar results and responses from the three methodologies used to answer my research question of “how to use altered states of consciousness inside a coaching model, as a transformative way of working with clients through a coach’s access to altered states and by providing/guiding altered states practices to clients?” has allowed me to pinpoint a few important aspects:

- Altered states are experienced to different intensities and the interpretation of the experience is related to the person’s worldview.
- A person’s AQAL constellation informs the coach and client on how to best use altered state practices.
- The importance of developing a system on how to integrate the experience of other dimensions after an altered state in a way that is transformative has to be according to the unique needs and capacities of the client.
- A coach’s love and compassion is fundamental for transformative work with a client because it allows for authentic engagement and enacting.
- A coach’s openness to intuition is a definite and challenging capacity for knowing what altered states practices recommend to clients.

I believe that this research has informed and confirmed my inquiry further. I would like to continue the research as part of an independent study course that I will be taking this coming Summer 2012 as I finish my Master’s degree. My focus of the research will be related to the different qualities in regards to intensities of altered states, how this different affects the possibility of integrating the experiences and the importance of adapting the altered state practice according to context and client’s culture.

This research has illuminated many aspects related to my own capacity of experiencing altered states, my current needs and values according to the autonomous

worldview, and the field related to a spiritual path that comes with the experiencing of altered states. My interviewees have inspired me with their stories and with their unique presence and method of coaching. Even if this research does not change the world's meaning and use of altered states it has certainly shifted my experience of the world where altered states have a unique dimension.

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APENDIX A

Interview Questions:

Upper Left Quadrant:

Tell me about your experiences with altered states.

How do you feel about the realizations that might occur during an altered state? Do you feel that altered states change your perspective of yourself and the world?

Tell me about how you integrate realizations from altered states into everyday living?

How do you feel about accessing altered states in your everyday?

How do you feel about altered states as meaningful tools for personal development?

What could be disadvantages of using altered states for personal growth?

Upper Right Quadrant:

Tell me about altered states practices (meditating, journeying, psychedelics, etc.)?

Can you share the specifics of your practices, what they consist of?

Do you prepare yourself before working with clients, does it includes a practice for an altered state of awareness (meditation, yoga, etc.)?

Tell me about what physical methods you use to embody awareness?

Lower Left Quadrant:

Tell me about the type of altered state practices you do with your clients?

Do you do these practices in groups or one on one with the client?

What is the importance of having a ritual as part of the altered state practice?

Tell me about prescribing altered state practices to clients?

What are the qualities of the intersubjective (we) space that closes or opens a person's experience into an altered state?

Lower Right Quadrant

Tell me about your system/structure for working with clients?

What are the different qualities of the use of the various options of infrastructure to work with clients (over the phone, in person, skype, individually, in groups)?

Do you think there's an appropriate context to work with clients to access altered states?

What is the current perspective on the use of altered states as part of facilitating change in Western societies?

What place do altered states have in the web of life?

APENDIX B

ICC- Coach Survey Questions:

The purpose of this survey is to collect personal perspectives on the relevancy of the use of altered states of consciousness inside a coaching program, as a transformative way of working with clients through a coach's access to altered states and providing/guiding altered states practices for/with clients.

Altered state is any temporary awareness state that is different from a normal waking state.

As a coach please provide your experience through coaching.

1. Which category below includes your age:
 - 21-28
 - 28-35
 - 35-42
 - 42-49
 - 49-56
 - 56-63
 - 63 or older
2. I am intellectually curious, have and active imagination, adventurous, sensitive to beauty, creative and in tune with my emotions.

Strongly agree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 strongly disagree
3. I have a tendency to be self-disciplined, aim for achievement and for planning rather than spontaneity.

Strongly agree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 strongly disagree
4. I am outgoing, feel energized in the company of others and optimistic

Strongly agree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 strongly disagree
5. I am interested in people, take time out for others and make people feel at ease.

Strongly agree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 strongly disagree
6. I have a tendency to be calm, emotionally stable and free from persistent negative feelings.

Strongly agree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 strongly disagree
7. It is important to have practices that connect me with deeper truths that provide well-being and harmony and that support me in realizing my highest potentials.

Strongly agree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 strongly disagree
8. How often have you experienced altered states of consciousness (through meditation, yoga, drug induced, drumming, etc.)?
 - Don't know
 - 1-4 times in my life
 - 4 or more times in my life
 - A few times a week

9. Do you believe that being exposed to altered states experiences opens a person's perspective of the world? Why?
10. Is it important to include practices of altered states of consciousness for personal development? Why?
11. Do you have practices that include altered states of consciousness (meditation, yoga, drumming, etc.)? Please describe.
12. Do you use altered states of consciousness as part of your coaching method? How?
13. Have you noticed a benefit in using altered states of consciousness inside coaching? Please describe.
14. What are the contraindications to the use altered states of consciousness with clients?
15. Do you consider that using altered states of consciousness affect intimacy with the client? How?

Appendix C

IT- Professors and students survey questions:

1. Which category below includes your age:
21-29
30-39
40-49
50 or older
2. I am intellectually curious, have and active imagination, sensitive to beauty, creative and aware of my feelings.
Strongly agree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 strongly disagree
3. It is important to have practices that connect me with deeper truths that provide well-being and harmony and that support me in realizing my highest potentials.
Strongly agree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 strongly disagree
4. Life's essential purpose is the growth or development of our consciousness.
Strongly agree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 strongly disagree
5. How often have you experienced non-ordinary states of consciousness (peak, flow, satori, bliss, etc)?
 - 1-2 times in my life
 - 4 or more times in my life
 - 1-2 times in my adulthood
 - 4 or more times in my adulthood
6. Do you believe that being exposed to non-ordinary state experiences increases a person's impulse for greater awareness?
Why?
7. Do you have practices for emotional balance like shadow work, therapy, introspection, etc.?
8. Is it important to include practices of non-ordinary states of consciousness for personal development?
9. Do you have a practice related to accessing non-ordinary states of consciousness?
10. Have you noticed a change in your ability to bring altered states of consciousness from having non-ordinary states experiences?

APENDIX D

Interview with Max Shupbach director of Deep Democracy and processwork practitioner. This interview was conducted on May 4th 2012 at 11:30 am (pacific time) through the phone with the use of a conference call service that records the call.

MS =Max Shupbach- interviewee

PA = Paulina Alanis - interviewer

PA: Ok great. SO I'm interested in this topic because of my experiences in altered states and on my own personal development to become more aware and awake.

MS: ok, thanks. What kind of altered states were you experiencing?

PA: Well, I started experiencing altered states when I was very young around and instinctively started meditating. And I have also tried psychedelics but mostly inside of ritual. So the first time I tried a psychedelic was acid-LSD and I took by mistake four times the recommended dose, so that was a very intense experience. Now I do yoga and meditation. And I'm starting to learn shamanic drumming, so that's something new for me.

MS: oh fun. Great, fun. Wow! Cool. So now your master's thesis, it's a master thesis?

PA: Yes. So then with integral theory it's been great to be able to organize it all.

MS: Integral what?

PA: Integral theory, I don't know if you've heard of Ken Wilber?

MS: yes, totally. So now you are part of Wilber's study group?

PA: so the master's that I study is based on the theory that he developed.

MS: oh fun. Great.

PA: Yes, so you had another question...

MS: oh, who else are you interviewing? Actually I was just curious about the first part but the second part, if you tell me who are you interviewing then I can think on what to say for the time that we have in the interview, in comparison, like what we do differently.

PA:ok, yes, great. So I interviewed a coach from ICC that applies also Wilber's method in coaching and I'm also interviewing a shaman and she's an anthropologist that studies from Micheal's Harners Foundation. And also

MS: So three different schools for now...and are you interviewing others?

PA: And maybe a transpersonal psychologist.

MS: and are you going to interview someone of the Grof's school or what?

PA: Yes, I wanted to but I haven't been received a response from anybody.

MS: Write me a note and I will connect you with some of those guys.

PA: Yeah, great I'd love that.

MS: ok, so I don't have many connections to that but what I'll do is that, I don't know if you saw that I am part of the group Deep Democracy Institute.

PA: Yeah, I looked into it, it looks really good.

MA: Thank you and our Moscow director is related to the Grof's group, so I'll connect you with Senya and she knows all those guys in California. Stan probably doesn't want to do it because he probably doesn't have the time but someone from the group there.

PA: ok, great, yeah. SO what I was thinking to have the conversation and then if there are questions that haven't been answered I'll do that at the end. Does that sound good?

MS: Yes, I just want to do what is good for your masters.

PA: ok, great. Thanks. So what are your experiences with altered states?

MS: Do you mean personally or in my work?

PA: Both, you can start with your personally and then with your work.

MS: SO you know I'm a child of the 60's, I am from Switzerland and I was interested in politics and social movements. And then the sixties hippie movement came along and I had the typical experiences of altered states induced by LSD and pot and whatever drug was around. So I also had non-traditional altered states, you know I grew up in the mountains so I always felt, like when I was skiing or was up in eh mountains, a sense of uh...special sense of timelessness and space and time-space didn't quite fit anymore. So actually when I first took LSD, I sort of felt at home in those worlds. I felt I knew that from my felt experiences to some extent. So like many others I have not taken drugs for years...so because also our whole work that we do is based... Do you know about the Deep Democracy concept?

PA: Yeah, I went into the website but if you could...

MS: What deep democracy is...is that like in your everyday life, like now, we are having a conversation that is leading about the concept of altered states and there's some linear information that you want from me that is being recorded. And you are going to use it for your thesis, hopefully.

PA: yeah.

MS: And there's a consensual reality meaning that there's a measurable part of that information. And then there's a relationship issue that is there always, if you want we can say a dreaming aspect, which is like you listen to my voice, and I listen to your voice so it creates a process between us. You might like the voice or not like the voice of feel different about it. Right?

PA: yeah.

MS: So that's the dreaming part, it's not measurable, it's subjective. So for example how you perceive the voice might be different to someone else's perception and that is a subjective experience is not measurable.

PA: Yes.

MS: That's the relational aspect, that we call the dreaming level. And there's an atmosphere, we are all really busy and the truth is that I haven't done interviews. You know I get so many requests for many different types of thesis and interviews and I never say yes. And for this one I just said yes I have no idea why.

PA: (laughs) great

MS: Really you know... and I

PA: I got lucky.

MS: Well, who knows, let's see how the interview is going.

PA: (laughs)

MS: So in that sense there are three levels, the essence or a sentient level with this minimal little signals that we barely notice and we think that the dreaming level and the minimal level is also altered states that are present in everybody's life all the time. And the only reason that they have been marginalized is that people don't put much focus on it, everybody has access to them, they are always present you can always find them. And in deep democracy's idea is that all three levels create reality. So in a way when people say altered states, that is the concept of non-linear.

PA: Yeah.

MS: You know, I'm sure you are familiar with the concept of non-linear, right?

PA: Yeah.

MS: Now if you look in mathematics for the concept of non-linear, the method, the term non-linear is actually a joke because there's barely anything in nature that is actually linear. So let's take a concept of nature that is non-linear. What is a rare animal in America?

PA: Mmm.. don't know a wolf?

MS: ok, so let's say wolfs are not that common right. So the concept of linear and non-linear is actually saying like the US is populated by wolfs and non-wolfs. It's the same idea, like altered states are the majority of what we go through, most access, most experiences that we go through are tinted, influenced and carried by subtle altered states and actually everyday our whole night is one big altered state, when we fall asleep and when we dream. We have all these myriad of experiences during the day, every second that we can access but that we prefer to call them altered states and then the one thing that its an enormous state that we can, that in a sense is somewhat nearly to some extent limited importance in our lives, you know. That's basically the approach that we use in deep democracy. We help groups and individuals to connect to those subtle altered states because they have the solutions to all the various problems that appear.

PA: Yeah, that's great. I think when I was trying to define and choose what word to use, whether altered states or non-ordinary states. And I was like I think altered states have the strength to it, because also you can see the bias of people about it.

MS: yes, and it's very good because...

PA: So I think that like you say there are also subtle states, more grounded ones and then more intense ones and it's hard to navigate sometimes. And I sounds like deep democracy helps people to get in touch with that and helps them navigate in that.

MS: Well yeah. You know we have Arnold Mindell's processwork approach that is framing these three levels and says that, you can look at this from an information view point, you can say that there's a, from a consensual reality point there's a measurable information that is recordable, then you can say that on the dreaming level, the subjective experiences non-measurable information but it still persists for example if you don't like someone and you still don't like them five minutes later. Like you come out of an encounter and the three of you and you can say "gee that was fun" and your friend can say "that was boring". So that is still persistent, you know the information remains that is on the sentient level we then think those are flickering signals, that's like when you say "did I see something, no I didn't see something..." Or maybe you walk down the street and you have a quick flirt, we call them a "quantum flirt", you think I wonder what happened to Jonas and then you think where did that come from, I haven't thought of Jonas or heard from him for the past 12 years. You come home and there's an email from him in your inbox. Everybody knows that kind of stuff right.

PA: Yes.

MS: SO those are flickering signals, meaning that they are not measurable but they are also non-consistent. So all of these things create constant reality and then that's the overall framework that we are using. But then the specialty in my mind about process work how we differ, for example with the integrative model or other models, is that then we have engineering tools on how to actually work with these states. So we are not a philosophy or a general spiritual approach or a transpersonal approach but we actually have a message that says that here is how they flow and here is what they do to have an

organic intelligence in the back ground that come more in the forward ground and come more in the background and we have ways of how to facilitate meaning make that flow easier. So that's really our work that we do in that sense. And you were also talking about shaman and shamanism, and we also have a lot of connection with the modality, has a lot of connection theoretically also but practically to Australian aboriginal concepts, like the dream time cosmology. And the interesting thing about those aboriginal cultures is that they don't have shamans like many shamanic cultures, but the whole culture per say is shamanic. Like for example in many shamanic cultures who is a woman or a man who sort of speak is at home in the altered states and works as a psycho pump, meaning that leads or stewards the community when they move through this altered states together and guides them and mentors them through, and has apprentices helps them in the altered states all of this which you know, right.

PA: yeah.

MS: where as in the for example, the Australian aboriginal is more like a general culture, like even the language like they don't have a presence of the future and the past. So let's say you have a kangaroo, the language allows you to say I (consensual reality) a kangaroo or I (dreamsoul) a kangaroo, meaning that I saw or experienced an altered state that was kangaroo like leaping forward in joy.

PA: mm-hmm, I see.

MS: So you can say for example when a child passes by I see a kangaroo so the dreamsoul is the child acting like a kangaroo. So you can also use it to describe for example that I a kangaroo is also what you might need to do in writing your thesis if you are feeling depressed or worried about how to get all the information together, the dreamsoul of the kangaroo is to leap and do it with joy. So the aboriginals call that the walkabout, that if you notice these altered states on an on going basis you can start to live your life like that and then the world will come together, the nature will come together and support you in what you do. Then you don't have to develop linear goals and strategies to move towards, and things will sort of happen magically because you follow these and everybody is doing that in an on going basis, so you don't go to a shaman for that, and then you go to your normal life. That is considered the normal life, or that is the original cosmology at least. And as you know the oppression so that has also changed, but it's still present in many small ways.

PA: yeah.

MS: I don't know but I thought you might be interested in that stuff.

PA: I am yeah. Very interested (laughs)

MS: (sighs)

PA: Because in the last month I've been going through these states like I was describing before and sometimes it feels like going through is that I am not thinking about the future or the past, just very much going with what is there.

MS: Yeah, that's great. That's how I try to leave my everyday life. We have a big organization now that is present in every continent and everything we do comes out of that. Yesterday we were in Holland and I am sitting there with Ellen and I tell her "you know maybe we should ask so and so, she's Spanish, if she would like to lead..." this sort of came out of nowhere right. And then the loud speaker in the airport says in Spanish "flight to Barcelona leaving now" and then I think that means yes. At the same

time that I am speaking about it the speaker says that a flight to Barcelona is leaving and I said yes, that's a yes. That's more important in my decision

PA: Because you don't have anybody in Spain?

MS: Yeah, we do but we need a European manager and we had a bunch of different people and one was a Spanish person. Why are you Spanish?

PA: No I'm Mexican.

MS: Fun, so Mexico is a great place.

PA: I was thinking because I speak Spanish.

MS: Why did you say you have an accent you don't have an accent whatsoever.

PA: I don't...so maybe is not my accent maybe is something else (laughs).

MS: Well what do they say or what?

PA: well maybe they'll ask me again what I was saying because they didn't get that.

MS: Well you know I get asked constantly where I am from. I think that's kind of racist. Sometimes I say I'm from other places. Like the other day I said I was a Native-American from the Oregon reservation. And the guy was like no, but I was so convincing that the guy finally said "I thought you had a German accent". And then he said "I'll be damned, you learn something new everyday".

PA: (laughs) Oh, that's funny.

MS: (laughs) that is funny.

PA; well, I want to go there...to Australia where those people with the shamanic cultures are.

MS: Australia? Yeah, you should go there once. That is fun. I had an Australian teacher and he just died last year, for many, many years, a very beautiful person. And they're not shaman teachers like your regular shaman teachers because of that. You know what I mean? Its not like I have access to altered states teaching, they call them wise men, they're not shamans and they call them uncle. The type of respect is uncle. Do they have that in Mexico?

PA: yeah I've heard that they call them tio or medicine man.

MS: But is a ritual, so they take drugs, like ayahuasca, right?

PA: in Mexico what they take is peyote and mushrooms.

MS: Australians don't take drugs for their rituals, they dance and sing but I shouldn't be saying much about it because I don't know enough to say other than is great to be there. (laughs)

PA: So what kind of practices do you do in your workshops?

MS: We do all kinds of things, originally the processwork that was developed by Arnold Mindell as a psychological method for individuals. And are you familiar with Carl Young a little? So Jung following Frued's development thought that dreams are "la via regia", the royal path to your own unconscious was through night dreams and Arnold Mindell was a Jungian originally and he came up with the idea in the research that if you work on a body symptom, which if you want I can experiment with you in a minute about that. That you can actually use a body symptom you find an experience that has the same path like your night dreams. Like let's say for example you have a headache and you explain how the headache is, and you maybe its like a thumping headache and then they might say I dreamt last night that somebody was drumming. So in Arny's idea was that that's what they call the dreambody. The dreambody is the idea that anything physically that we have during the day is actually a subtle altered state, so your body is dreaming because

you've become too normal. So in your everyday life you develop a normal identity and everything that is out of your control that is out of your identity either becomes a mental altered state or a physical altered state in terms of a body symptom. And you can then unfold that or go more deeply into that and then you can find the meaning for it, which we frequently also relieve the body symptom and also has a positive effect on like illnesses and things like that. So that's how we started out, then that was developed for groups, because groups also are looking or in need of an altered state, so like I said before all cultures are like moments when they were dancing and drumming and singing together to experience a different level of community other than sitting together and talking and making decisions together and all of that. Out of that came group work, specially in conflict, we think that conflict is attempt for groups to go beyond the normal day identities and find new and different meanings in something more altered. So that's why we think that conflict is beginning good step, if you can use it and unfolds and goes deeper it helps for groups to come more together. So now in our work we do a lot of conflict resolution, we really work a lot with companies and organizations, where we try to help organization, even big international corporations to find more subtle altered states that can create community and sense of direction and the organizational spirit that is moving everything and that's more or less what we do.

PA: That's great.

MS: And of course we don't always say like this you know. Let's say that if we talk to someone who's interested in shamanism, so let's say I talk to an aboriginal person, and the aboriginal person says we believe in the rainbow serpent. Do you know about the rainbow serpent?

PA: Mmm... not sure.

MS: The aboriginals believed that the universe is a rainbow serpent and that the universe was created in dream time and everything that you see now, all the drama that happens is part of the dreamtime drama and what is moving it in the background is this magic mythical huge being called the rainbow serpent.

PA: Oh, I see.

MS: So let's say if we talked to an aboriginal and the aboriginal would say to me... Actually I don't work in Australia so much now I go to Africa and Asia but we worked with Australian aboriginals with problems of depression and suicidal and things like that, as a result of oppression. But let's say he would say "how do you feel about that because we believe in the dream time serpent?" And I would congruently say, well I do too, because I believe in the truth of the Schrodinger equation, do you know the Schrodinger equation?

PA: I don't.

MS: It's from quantum physics, that basically says that you can look at the universe as a multi-spectral vibrational event. So multispectral and big rainbow that has a wave, you know that the universe has a wave nature, I'm sure you've heard about that. So the wave nature, that's the serpent.

PA: Yeah, it makes sense.

MS: So who's right? Is it really a rainbow serpent? And is it a physicist way of explaining the rainbow serpent by saying it's a multi-spectral vibrational tendency? Or the other way around, and the aboriginal are calling it a serpent because it doesn't have the mathematical language, who knows? So we adapt the language always, the process

the experiences that you make are your own but the core and the essence and the depth of these experiences they belong to humanity as a whole and how you then frame them and name them, we don't think that is such a big issue, because in a way that is up to the facilitator that he can go with a given culture and if the corporate culture says this is about us coming together and finding a new direction of where we want to go then that's fine.

PA: So you adapt to the group, if the group doesn't understand other ideas, then you work with what they understand?

MS: Yes, the only thing that I would add to that is the way you just said it, makes it sound that we believe there's a true framework for this. But that's not what we think we think there's a real framework and that's processmind, those experiences that we talked about.

PA: Oh I see.

MS: So we start out with the experiences of the group and we follow the experience of the group knowing that this concept of processing is behind all the experiences and how the group wants to frame that and we go along with that. And if they say that's shamanism, or integrative psychology, etc. we say ok why not.

PA: mm-hmm

MS: We go along with how you work with the experience.

PA: I see, yeah, I like that.

MS: Thank you, thank you, is very democratic. We don't say this one is right and this one is not and maybe because maybe this one is more backwards we can't help them, no, everybody has their own idea of reality and they're all true but then how do you work with the experience of reality that is a whole other issue.

PA: So it's very open and unfolding too, because I imagine as you go you keep unfolding more your own experience.

MS: Yeah, and you follow your own experience and you start to understand the wisdom, you know. So the question is always, like we are having this conversation with you now, all of these discussions, I just came back from two conferences this week where I was in two panels and then the discussion is always the what. And those are good questions, like what are you doing with this...etc. but the questions that are barely asked is how, because on the what is one thing to agree but then the how, that why you say its not always easy to manage these altered states, and we can have along discussion about what do they mean and what's good about them but then how do you work with them, that's then the thing becomes interesting for me.

PA: yeah, great. Thanks. I like that how we been talking and what you've been sharing with me a lot of my questions are answered, you know.

MS: great. How about now I give you a demonstration?

PA: ok, great. Yeah.

MS: You want to?

PA: Yes!

MS: Ok, make yourself comfortable, if you're not already comfortable make yourself comfortable.

PA: I am already, but ok.

MS: So we'll just do this for a couple of minutes. As you sit there what do you notice about yourself?

PA: There's a part that is thinking what to answer, and there's a small part that is thinking what its true answer?

MS: ok, that's very cool. So this sounds like an inner dialogue type of thing maybe?

PS: yeah.

MS: I haven't done this quite before because people usually come up with an issue, ok. So let's assume for a moment that you are more identified with your inner dialogue and that there's this thing that you have identified with that says there has to be a true answer, it's a little bit over text, you have to give the right answer and the other one is how do I find it. That's a good conversation right? So I would forget that for now...just notice your body. Notice anything in your body that feels either uncomfortable or unknown...a disturbance even if it's a small one or one that you're like hmm-weird!

PA: I think that its related to what I was describing before about having those intense altered states and I am feeling them a little right now, but I'm like not wanting it to be there because it's so intense (giggles)

MS: I like your giggle. So yeah I like your giggle. So my task is going to be to help you keep it out.

PA: ok.

MS: ok, great. Don't do it but do something else that's fun and quick and don't think much about it. Make a hand movement that in your mind is intense. Make a hand movement that shows intensity.

PA: ok, I did.

MS: Make it and do it a few more times until you feel what is good about it.

PA: (silence) So it's very energetic.

MS: So if you can think of yourself for a moment as a very energetic person with the freedom to be as energetic as you would like to be, just for a second what would you do?

PA: I would go to Australia.

MS: Australia, because of what I said or what?

PA: Yeah, because of what you said. And also I would like to be outside more and do things outside, because I live in Washington State.

MS: you live in Washington State? I thought you lived in California, isn't JFK in California?

PA: Yeah but I do it online.

MS: So if you didn't live in Washington State you would do more things outside?

PA: Yeah.

MS: So say one thing you would do this weekend outside, instead of not.

PA: Going swimming in the ocean.

MS: ok, you have to do it. I live in Oregon so I know what is to swim in the ocean.

PA: But it's so cold.

MS: I know its just one second. Just one second. It's intense.

PA: Yeah, ok.

MS: I am a long distance runner you know and I have constant sports injuries so this summer I had a pulled tendon. And I forced myself to go into the Oregon Ocean because its very good on the pulled tendons, you know the cold thing.

PA: I didn't know.

MS: Yeah, if you have anything that is pulled, you have to freeze it basically. So I would force myself to go into the ocean for 4 or 5 minutes and I would curse into the gods, and all the Christians saints, and any other

PA: (laughs)

MS: all the other that we are supposed to respect in life while I'm forcing myself through it. I loved it. I hated it and I loved it.

PA: Yeah.

MS: I think you are a very intense person. IS that true? I feel it from you. I love that about you.

PA: Yeah. If I can ask you more about the altered states, do you experience that?

MS: I'm sorry your voice went out...what did you say?

PA: About how the movement of the states, you were saying that you experience that, so I'm wondering how do you navigate with that?

MS: So you said that you feel something that is an altered state that comes up?

PA: Yeah.

MS: So then I did that practice and it was something that has a lot of movement and intensity. So then I thought you are probably a very intense person but you are a little shy about your intensity. Is that possible?

PA: Yeah, it can be. Yeah.

MS: Yeah. Like do you sometimes think you are too much for people?

PA: Yeah...mmm... Well I've changed a lot in the last couple of years.

MS: How about your edge of going out in the world and doing stuff, Do you sometimes feel a little shy there...or?

PA: Yeah, I study a lot right now, so I don't go out much because I study most of the time. But I think that yeah, that might be, like before I was more complaint and more going along with other people when that's not my thing.

M: If you were free to change the world any way you wanted to, how would you change the world?

PA: If I could change the world I would have an idea like deep democracy to work with others in need. I like that idea.

MS: Oh really. Well you should join our institute.

PA: Yeah I'm thinking about it. Because I had looked at it online but now that I'm talking with you about it. I feel like it's what I'm experiencing too.

MS: Oh great. There's a workshop that we are having in SF in a couple of weeks. Please join us as our guest.

PA: Oh great. Thank you.

MS: Just don't tell anybody or I'll get in trouble.

PA: Ok, great Ill look into it. SO I think what is coming up for me it's getting out and doing what I really feel is my passion.

MS: Yeap, that's the intensity. And I would encourage you to use that hand movement and go out there. I guess at the moment you are completing your thesis also no? Maybe you have to wait before you come to a workshop, you have to finish your thesis.

PA: So that will be over at the middle of June.

MS: Oh and then?

PA: I have one more class in the summer and then I get my degree.

MS: what's your degree in? it's a masters in psychology?

PA: It's a master in integral theory. So when I'm done with my masters, in the summer my plan is to start looking at where I can work and do something that I feel is my passion.

MS: That's fun, that's cool. That's really cool.

PA: Yeah. So then I'll look into going to your workshop.

MS: Yeah, you have to finish your thesis and then you can look on the website, we have many workshops. I think there's one in the fall in SF. My offer stands if you can come in the fall. Do your thesis, go out there and change the world. You have a lot of energy, go change the world. I'm behind you. I really like you.

PA: Thank you.

MS: I like your vibes, I can feel your vibes. You are lighthearted, good hearted, it feels like you've had some rough spots in your life and came out well and strong on the other side. You sound and I experience you as a person who has a good heart and good mind. The world needs people like you, go out there and do your thing. And force yourself and your beauty and your intelligence and your mind everybody's throat. Don't be shy.

PA; (laughs). Yeah, thank you. That's a good advice actually.

MS: ok. (laughs). If I can be of help with anything, if you ever want to connect to us, always write to me.

PA: ok, thank you so much Max, for your time and for everything.

MS; Think of yourself as having a friend, as of now, you have a friend here in Oregon.

PA: Thanks so much. That's really nice. Thanks.

MS: So in case you do decide to come to SF. You just sign up and the guy who's doing the registering his name is Bill Say. Just write me a quick note so I tell Bill that you are coming as our guest. But anyhow, Bill is like, is not very formal so.

PA: Ok ,thanks.

MS: So this one is focusing on groups and finding the unspoken true in groups. So I don't know if that's interesting to you. But in one way or another we will reconnect, I know that.

PA: Yeah, I will look into that, if it's not this one then maybe the one coming up in the fall. But thank you so much.

MS: You are so welcome my dear. I'm giving you a telephone hug through the telephone vibe. And I'm just thrilled an happy for the planet that there's people like you there doing your thing and if you have at one point or other a pdf version of your thesis you send it to us and we put it on our website.

PA: ok, yeah I will do that. Thank you so much for your help.

MS; Best luck with everything.

PA: Thank you.

MS: Ciao Paulina Ciao.

PA: Bye