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THE VALUE OF EXISTENTIAL WORLDS: CREATION AND VALIDATION OF A
MEASURE TO EXPLORE THE FOUR EXISTENTIAL WORLDS

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to Graduate Faculty

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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This dissertation, submitted by Matthew Rozzi in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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Matthew Rozzi
05/11/2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Existential Theory and Measurements	3
Purpose	7
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	9
Introduction	9
Existential Philosophy	9
Existential Psychotherapy	20
The Existential Worlds	29
Operationalization of the Four-Worlds	35
Values	38
Related Extant Measures	40
Significance of Study	41
Validation of the VEW: Research Hypotheses	43
3 METHODOLOGY	46
Overview Research Design	46
Participants	47
Measures	49
Procedure	61

4 ANAYSIS AND RESULTS	65
Demographic Differences	66
Factor Structure	74
Reliability and Validity	76
5 DISCUSSION	84
Reliability	84
Validity	84
Philosophical Considerations	92
Limitations of Study	95
Implication for Practice	96
TABLES (See list of Tables)	101
APPENDICES	110
A Demographic Questions	117
B Initial Pool of Items and Expert Review Instructions	119
C Final VEW Items	129
D Instruments	133
REFERENCES	145

LIST OF TABLES

1. *Internal Reliability for VEW Scales (63-item VEW)*
2. *Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 2 (63-item VEW)*
3. *Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 3 (63-item VEW)*
4. *Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 4 (63-item VEW)*
5. *Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 5 (63-item VEW)*
6. *Results from a Factor Analysis of the 63-item VEW Maximum Likelihood Oblimin Rotation (.4 and higher loadings included)*
7. *Scree Plot of the 63-item VEW (Maximum Likelihood Oblimin Rotation)*
8. *Internal Reliability for VEW Short Form Scales (20-item VEW)*
9. *Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 2 (20-item VEW)*
10. *Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 3 (20-item VEW)*
11. *Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 4 (20-item VEW)*
12. *Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 5 (20-item VEW)*
13. *Rotated Factor Matrix of 20-item VEW Maximum Likelihood Extraction (Oblimin Rotation)*
14. *Scree Plot of 20-item VEW Maximum Likelihood Extraction (Oblimin Rotation)*
15. *Summary of Multiple Regression of demographic variables on the Uberwelt subscale*

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To my parents and grandparents.

Abstract

The field of counseling psychology is increasingly focused on understanding clients in holistic and non-pathologizing ways. Existential theory provides *the four-worlds model* for exploring human existence in line with this modern psychological zeitgeist. In this model, humans are understood to exist simultaneously in four “worlds” or “dimensions”: physical (*umwelt*), social (*mitwelt*), psychological (*eigenwelt*), and spiritual/philosophical (*uberwelt*). This measure construction project is the first known study to examine the personal importance (value) of existing in each world. The Value of Existential Worlds (VEW) was created and psychometrically examined. From the initial 63-items, a shorter (20-item) version was created which demonstrated a clear 4 factor model based in theory. With a sample of 202 individuals, the VEW scales demonstrated excellent internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) ranging from .87 for the *Umwelt* scale to .81 on the *Mitwelt* scale. Initial evidence for validity includes VEW scales correlating significantly with theoretically related scales. The *Umwelt* (physical world) scale was significantly correlated with the Antianthropocentrism subscale ($r = .23, p < .01$). The *Mitwelt* (social world) scale was significantly correlated with the Social Well-Being Scale ($r = .37, p < .01$). The *Eigenwelt* (psychological world) scale was significantly correlated with the Authenticity Scale Self-Alienation subscale ($r = -.31, p < .01$). The *Uberwelt* (spiritual/philosophical world) scale was significantly correlated with the Spiritual Meaning Scale ($r = .60, p < .01$) and the Purpose in Life Test ($r = .49, p < .01$).

keywords: psychology, existential psychotherapy, philosophy

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

“Instead of using a diagnostic framework, which categorizes and labels personal characteristics, existential therapists use a framework that described the basic dimensions of human existence. The idea is to provide a map of human existence on which an individual’s position and trajectory can be plotted and understood.”

– Emmy van Deurzen

Statement of the Problem

Psychological assessment is an essential competency and practice for psychologists (Rodolfa et al., 2005). Owens, Magyar-Moe, and Lopez (2015) identify three core reasons assessment is critical: 1) it guides client conceptualization and diagnostic decisions 2) it informs treatment planning and 3) it provides a means to evaluate ongoing processes and outcomes of therapy. Counseling psychology is a specific branch of applied psychology that must use psychological assessment. Counseling psychology is also a field focused on *strengths, wellness* and *optimal functioning*, though this focus on strengths has not always been born out in the assessments counseling psychologists use (Gelso, Nutt Williams, & Fretz, 2014; Owens, Magyar-Moe, & Lopez, 2015). In fact, often the field – with regard to assessment does not live up to this focus on strengths. Assessment has all too often become the domain of exploring pathological traits (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Existential and humanistic counseling psychologists are uniquely positioned to take the reins, and lead the field away from an assessment philosophy which is rooted in nosology and into an assessment philosophy which is rooted in strengths, optimal functioning, and lived experience (Levitt et al., 2005).

Unfortunately, many of the extant instruments used for assessment are based on exploring pathology. It is the use of these tools which operationalize and quantify pathology that

leads to increased data on pathology which then reifies and reinforces a philosophy of assessment and practice focused on deficits (Levitt et al., 2005). Psychology has in many ways fallen prey to the adage, “if you have only a hammer then every problem looks like a nail.” Modern instruments are designed to find a problem and when they do, this provides more evidence for deficit-based psychology. Nietzsche was talking about this problem when he stated, “All things are subject to interpretation. Whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power and not truth.” If this deficit-focus is to be overcome, assessment instruments themselves need to be designed and calibrated to explore strengths-based, and non-pathological dimensions of existence. In their work evaluating outcome measures used in humanistic psychotherapy research, Levitt et al., (2005) write, “If humanistic psychologists are to show that therapy works the way they say it will work, their instruments need to reflect their own theories of development and models of psychotherapy.”

A few promising models exist that attempt to focus on wellness and holism such as the Wellness Wheel (Myers, Sweeny, & Witmer, 2000), The Bio-Psycho-Social Model (Engel, 1977) and a few others; however, all of these models use as their starting point an epistemological approach – *how do we know what is true* about “disease” and “wellness” and then, using this knowledge, *how can we know what works to make things better?*

Existential theory attempts to go a step beyond the traditional epistemological approach and explore the *ontological* – the nature of reality. The theory is concerned with what it is like to *exist*. What might we need to know about the nature of reality and how we exist as humans in order to even begin to understand what constructs like *wellness, optimization, health, strength* really mean? How can you answer what it means to *function* as a human if you don’t first explore what it is to *be* a human? There is an obvious deficit in the knowledge regarding humanistic

instruments. This very large question goes mainly unanswered throughout the field - especially in assessment.

Existential Theory and Measurements

Existential theory offers a rich tradition of writings and theoretical models aimed at exploring human existence *just as it is* without focus on deficits, pathology, or unnecessary nosological classification. In the original three worlds model theorized by Heidegger (1927), individuals can be understood to exist in several dimensions or “worlds” simultaneously: a physical world, social world, psychological world. Van Deurzen (2005) is credited with the addition of the “fourth” world: the philosophical/spiritual world. This four-worlds model has very little empirical research, though it has historically been found to be useful for clinicians (van Deurzen, 2005). As Levitt et al., (2005) give an impassioned plea for humanistic psychologists to provide evidence-based support for their theories and models, I have attempted to answer their call. In this scale development and validation project, I have created a measure based on the existential four-worlds model to begin the process of empirical study of the four-worlds.

Existential psychology, an orientation belonging under the humanistic umbrella, has few validated instruments exploring models and constructs to support its rich tradition and intervention efficacy. Existential psychology has four main therapeutic sub-branches (van Deurzen, 2005): logotherapy, humanistic-existential approach, daseinanalysis, and the new (British) school. Several measures have been created based on the philosophical roots of logotherapy including: The Purpose-in-Life Test (Crumbaugh and Maholick, 1969), the Seeking of Noetic Goals (Crumbaugh, 1977), the Existence Scale (Längle, Orgler, & Kundi, 2003), The Multidimensional Existential Meaning Scale (George & Park, 2016) and several others. There

may be some debate about exactly which measures belong within the humanistic-existential umbrella, however it is clear that several exist including: The Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008), The Spiritual Meaning Scale (Mascaro, Rosen and Morey, 2003), and several others.

There exist a few scales to measure a specific existential construct: existential anxiety including: The Existential Study (Thorne, 1973), The Existential Anxiety Scale (Good & Good, 1974), The Existential Anxiety Scale (Bylski & Westman, 1991), the Fear Scale (Walters, 2000), and the Existential Anxiety Questionnaire (Weems, Costa, Dehon, & Berman, 2004). It is interesting that even within the existential tradition measurement seems focused on the *concerns* (existential anxiety) that individuals experience. These scales could potentially be classified within several of the four therapeutic sub-branches.

The Daseinanalysis branch of existential psychology has few if any modern validated psychological instruments. Daseinanalysis is perhaps the branch with the most abstracted constructs and models that do not lend themselves easily to operationalization. Daseinanalysis draws on the work of Heidegger's notion of being-in-the world (dasein). Daseinanalysis philosophy rejected the classic Freudian notion (deficit-based) that intrapsychic discord is the cause of suffering and pathology and suggests that suffering is the result of people having a limited or restricted way of relating to their world (van Deurzen, 2005). Theorists within daseinanalysis are responsible for the creation of the "four-worlds" model of existence which is a model used to help individuals with the problem of limited ways of relating to their world. In this model of human existence, individuals exist in the physical world, an inner psychological world, a social world, and a philosophical/meaning making world simultaneously (van Deurzen, 2005.)

The way we relate to these "worlds" including how important we make them, impacts our psychological health. Psychologists know that health is multifaceted. Psychological "health" is

often dependent upon wellness across multiple domains – physical, mental, social, and spiritual. Many traditional assessments touch upon various aspects of these dimensions of existence, but none intentionally explore them with depth. Nor do any use an existential approach in exploring how human existence can be understood – as “dimensions” or “worlds” in which we move through simultaneously.

Even existential psychologists who hold that an exploration of the dimensions of existence are important must currently rely on their clinical interview skills alone to obtain data related to the four-worlds (van Deurzen, 2005). In her text on *Existential Counseling and Psychotherapy in Practice*, van Deurzen herself offers several occasions where she suggests that the *doing* of existential therapy is much less about prescriptive methods and more about an *attitude* toward the work (van Deurzen, 2012). Thus, the textbook with “practice” in its name has very little to say about the *how* of the practice. For many existential practitioners, this ambiguity is interpreted as *freedom*, but in existential philosophy, freedom cannot exist without responsibility (May, 1983.) It is the responsibility of psychologists to test theory and use models that are evidence-based.

It is the responsibility of existential practitioners to design and implement instruments that can begin to explore and test models and constructs so that data can be gathered, and evidence provided for the use or abandonment of ideas and interventions (Levitt et al., 2005). The present study is an attempt at creating such a measure, The Value of Existential Worlds (VEW). The VEW explores how much value individuals place in their existence within each of the four-worlds. This helps to answer the question “how does someone exist in the world?” from a humanistic-existential perspective – a perspective that is often overlooked in modern psychological research.

One final note, that must be mentioned before proceeding: many humanists and existentialists find operationalization of humanistic-existential models and constructs to be reductionistic (Vos et al., 2013; van Bruggen et al., 2015). Van Deurzen (2012) reminds her readers that existential psychology should be wary of reducing the theory and consequently the human “spirit”. She also encourages clinicians to be careful and mindful that we are seeing the world and individuals as it is, not as we want it to be because we superimpose theoretical models onto reality. She reminds us of Alfred Korzybski ‘s quote “the map is not the territory” (Van Deurzen, 2012 p. 12). She also reminds us that we need to constantly be doing reality testing – exploring if what we are seeing is the way the world actually is. This project is a kind of reality testing of how we can understand human existence- asking the: can the four-worlds model be operationalized? This begs the further question if it can be operationalized, can this operationalization be clinically useful?

The four-worlds model is just that – a model or heuristic device. The map of human existence is a map. But as clinicians and researchers we *need* maps because it is impossible to always see the territory. Van Deurzen (2016) explains this well, “...human existence is a lot more complex than this [the four-worlds] and we face challenges on every level all at once, and all dimensions are woven and knotted together...” It is impossible to see the actual territory, but important to create a map to scale reality down in a digestible, clinically useful way. She says, “To pay attention to these different dimensions [the four-worlds] will provide a first framework of organization for the data we collect.” We need the map to help us organize data about reality but need to remember that it is not reality in its totality. We also need to continually test our maps with reality to ensure that they are properly *calibrated* to the territory.

To this end, we need scientific data to test complex models and theories to ensure that they are accurately capturing reality. Additionally, in the modern age of empirically supported treatments, evidence for efficacy is not a luxury but a requirement for best-practice (Christon, McLeod, & Jensen-Doss, 2015). There is an inherent tension in this work – a marriage of empirical science with existential philosophy (and specifically the phenomenologically-based *daseinanalysis*) is not a usual one, but for the sake of existential psychology's continued relevance, it is a necessary one. I discuss this tension further in the discussion section.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to begin the process of constructing and validating a multidimensional measure designed to elucidate an individual's values (what they find important) about their existence using the framework of the four-worlds model from existentialism. What dimensions of existence (physical, social, psychological, and spiritual) does a person find most or least important? Using existential theory as a guide in constructing the measure, I have attempted to make this useful to therapists and researchers engaged in humanistic, existential, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and other psychological orientations in which the explication of an individuals' way of relating to their world and their values are germane to the counseling process.

The theory of the existential worlds was converted into psychometrically testable constructs to create a measure that can potentially provide normative and ipsative data about what dimensions of a person's existence are most important to them. This measure attempts to scale how important a person believes each dimension of existence is to them. For the initial measure construction project, four constructs (based on the four-worlds) were explored. Further

research could unpack these dimensions into further sub-domains based on theory and psychometric data.

The ultimate goal of this measure is to provide data that psychologists can use to assist clients achieve the goals of therapy. The VEW measure does not assess how much of a particular dimension individuals *have*. We all exist in each dimension. It would be impossible to say I have more *existence* as a physical being. But as researchers, we can explore how *important* it is for a person to *exist within* the physical dimension. Value-driven action is a key component in existential theory and thus value or “importance” was the chosen way to scale the worlds. I recognize that this is certainly not the only way to scale this model. Potential discrepancy between self-reported value (e.g. a person states that they highly value their existence within the physical dimension) with observed manifestation of strengths/deficits (e.g. a person is not eating healthy or getting enough exercise) may help a clinician explore what roadblocks toward increased strength and wellness may exist. Value or importance the scale dimension could potentially offer clinical utility.

Thus, the present study is an attempt to operationalize previously only a theoretical model and also an attempt to create a measure that can assist practitioners in leading their clients toward well-being. In the spirit of existential philosophy, this scale construction project explores both what is potentially meaningful for researchers, and how this knowledge can be put into practice.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“In many Eastern languages such as Japanese, adjectives always include the implication of ‘for-me-ness’. That is to say, ‘this flower is beautiful’ means ‘for me this flower is beautiful’. Our Western dichotomy between subject and object has led us, in contrast, to assume that we have said most if we state that the flower is beautiful entirely divorced from ourselves, as though as statement were the more true in proportion to how little we ourselves have to do with it.”

-Rollo May

In the following literature review, I will review several definitions, provide a brief history and tenets of existential philosophy and existential psychotherapy, and explore and define the “four-worlds” model.

Before I begin, I want to note that this is a unique work in that I am traversing two disciplines – philosophy and psychology. As my formal training is in the science of psychology, this is first and foremost a work dedicated to advancing psychological knowledge, not philosophical knowledge. As such, I would like to begin with humility as I must occasionally move into the realm of philosophy and would like to do so with respect to limits of both my abilities as a psychological researcher and the ability of science to marry a humanity.

Existential Philosophy

The word philosophy comes from ancient Greek and literally translates to “love of wisdom.” To love wisdom, we must often look to the origins of how the wisdom was earned. This means exploring the foundations and working our way up to the present day. In this review, I intend to explore the basic foundations of the philosophy that is existentialism and work my way specifically toward the four-worlds model.

A full exploration of existential philosophy is well beyond the scope of this work. As such, I will attempt to touch briefly on some of the major texts and thinkers before focusing my energy on work related to the four-worlds model. It will be helpful to begin by exploring some of

the texts that have often been claimed to be philosophical bedrock. Cooper (1990) writes that unlike other major philosophical schools, almost none of the “great existentialist tomes contain the word existentialism.” These tomes are works of both philosophy and fiction. There include four major sources of information on existential philosophy: 1) generalist books/compendiums covering what the philosophy is, 2) non-fiction work cited as gold standard in revealing existential ideas, 3) philosophical works expounding existential ideas, 4) psychological works translating existential philosophy to existential psychological theory and practice.

Cooper (1990) writes that surprisingly few general books on existential philosophy have been written. These works include Cooper’s own (1990) *Existentialism*, Kaufmann’s (1965) *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Barret’s (1958) *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy*, and Thomas’s (2006) *Existentialism - A Short Introduction*.

Several fictional books and plays have been claimed to capture the “spirit” or “attitude” of the philosophy including Dostoevsky’s (1864) *Notes from the Underground*, Nietzsche’s (1885) *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Camus (1942) *The Stranger*, Kafka’s (1915) *The Trial*, Beckett’s (1953) *Waiting for Godot*, Sartre’s (1945) *The Age of Reason*, and many others.

Some of philosophical works claimed to be most influential to the philosophy include Kierkegaard’s (1843) *Fear and Trembling*, Nietzsche’s (1882) *The Gay Science*, Heidegger’s (1927) *Being and Time*, Sartre’s (1946) *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, and de Beauvoir’s (1949) *The Second Sex*. Several psychologists have written works on Existential Psychotherapy including Frankl’s (1946) *Man's Search for Meaning*, May’s (1960) *Existential Psychology*, Yalom’s (1980) *Existential Psychotherapy*, Hoffman’s (2009) *Existential Psychology East and West*, and van Deurzen’s (2012) *Existential Counseling and Psychotherapy in Practice*. This is by no means meant to be an exhaustive list, and each writer often brings her or his own flavor to

the theory- often with entire subclassifications (e.g. Frankl's logotherapy). An entire work could be created to explore the taxonomy of the theory. This work expounds mainly upon van Deurzen's work and so will often be pulling from her text as well as her other works.

Existential psychotherapy, unlike any other applied psychological theory (aside from perhaps cognitive-based theories which have their genesis in the works of the stoics,) is based almost entirely on the work of philosophers, not psychological theorists, or researchers. Existentialism was first a philosophy unbound to the science of psychology. Rather than explore the philosophy unchecked we must work our way backwards in order to have meaningful boundaries for the review. In this way, this is in many ways a review of the philosophy that is *meaningful to this work*.

Diversity and Convergence in Existential Philosophy

In the 1950 film *Rashomon*, the audience learns about a single event from the perspective of several different characters. This idea of perspective has been given its own term in communication theory – the Rashomon effect (Davenport, 2010). This effect has to do with the uniqueness or even unreliability of individual perspectives. It describes a situation in which an event is given differing interpretations or descriptions by the individuals involved. After reading through several histories of existentialism and explanations of what existentialism as a philosophy stands for, I have found that existential philosophy is a great example of this Rashomon effect. Each author seems to have her or his own version of who is the “first” philosopher, who the major thinkers are, and what coherent tenants should be included. Many authors acknowledge this frustrating starting point. Kaufmann (1965, p. 11) states:

“Existentialism is not a philosophy but a label for several widely different revolts

against traditional philosophy...Certainly existentialism is not a school of thought nor reducible to any set of tenants. The three writers who appear invariably on every list of “existentialists” – Jaspers, Heidegger, and Sartre are not in agreement on essentials...Once Pascal, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Rilke, Kafka, and Camus are included in the fold and it becomes plain that one essential feature shared by all is their fervid individualism.

Cooper (1990, p. 6) seems to be responding to Kaufman. He holds more faith in a coherent structure of the philosophy and tenants that bind existential philosophers together:

“It is sometimes said that the reason it is hard to draw up an exact list is that existentialism is a mere ‘tendency’ rather than a coherent philosophy. Now, while I do not want to minimize the differences between individual writers, I do hope to demonstrate that there is a coherent, definable philosophy of existentialism... The reason it is hard to place certain thinkers in is not that the characterization of existentialism must be vague, but because they fit the characterization in some respects but not others.

Cooper (1990) continues, (perhaps sardonically), “existentialism is what existentialists embrace, and existentialists are people who embrace existentialism.” Cooper’s list of existentialists includes Heidegger and Sartre as sure bets. He indicates that most other writers could very well be classified existential, though he acknowledges the controversy. These writers

include Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Hegel, Jaspers, Kafka, de Beauvoir, Ortega y Gasset, and many others.

Van Deurzen (2005) suggests the origins of existentialism go farther back suggesting that, “Philosophers as varied and widely apart as Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, Marcus Aurelius, Augustine, Spinoza, Kant, Rousseau, Hume, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger Wittgenstein and Sartre” are important thinkers in the tradition.

A brief note on diversity – the existential tradition does stem mainly from European, White thinking. Its proponents have often been White and male, though some notable female existentialists include Simone de Beauvoir, and the author whose work this very study is based on – Emmy van Deurzen. There have been relatively few people of color offering perspectives on the philosophy which is problematic. There do exist a few individuals of color including Ortega y Gasset, Clemmont Vontress, Magnus Bassey, and Albert Chan. This is not an exhaustive list or meant to note token individuals of color, but rather an offer to explore diverse perspectives on the theory that may not be given enough attention. See Bassey (2007) for a review of *Africana Critical Theory/ Black Existentialism*. See Clemmont Vontress’s works for a variety of works exploring multiculturalism from an existential perspective.

All of these names of course mean nothing of course without an understanding of their positions. Before diving into a select few philosophers and their positions I will attempt to offer a few perspectives on what existentialism is.

Cooper (1990) suggests two broad *themes* that define what existentialism is as a philosophy: 1) there is distinctive character of human existence (e.g. being human is unlike being any other ‘thing’ and that humans alone are interested in what it is like to *be* human) and 2) the most serious work that philosophy must wrestle with is *alienation* in its various forms (from self,

from world, and from others). Kaufman (1965) prefers to let the individuals speak for themselves. It is fitting that Kaufman poses the question to us “Could it be that at least some part of what the existentialists attempt to do is best done in art and not philosophy?”

Thomas (2006) suggests that the most important *value* (what is important) of the philosophy is *freedom* while the primary *virtue* (what is sought after) of existentialism is authenticity. Thomas (2006, p. 8) finds something of a middle ground between Cooper and Kaufman writes that there are five themes in the works that are a “family resemblances” manifest in unique ways by each of the writers. These themes are:

1. Existence precedes essence. What you are (your essence) is the result of your choices (your existence) rather than the reverse. Essence is not destiny. You are what you make yourself to be.
2. Time is of the essence. We are fundamentally time-bound beings. Unlike measurable, ‘clock’ time, lived time is qualitative: the ‘not yet’, the ‘already’, and the ‘present’ differ among themselves in meaning and value.
3. Humanism. Existentialism is a person-centered philosophy. Though not anti-science, its focus is on the human individual’s pursuit of identity and meaning amidst the social and economic pressures of mass society for superficiality and conformism.
4. Freedom/responsibility. Existentialism is a philosophy of freedom. Its basis is the fact that we can stand back from our lives and reflect on what we have been doing. In this sense, we are always ‘more’ than ourselves. But we are as responsible as we are free.

5. Ethical considerations are paramount. Though each existentialist understands the ethical, as with 'freedom', in his or her own way, the underlying concern is to invite us to examine the authenticity of our personal lives and of our society.

Patterns begin to emerge in the course of this literature review. Sartre, Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard are names that appear in just about every review of the philosophy. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were dead before the term "existentialism" was coined by Gabriel Marcel in the mid-1940s. Only Sartre was alive to respond to being labeled "existential." He attempts to define what the philosophy is in his work *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946), "Man is not only that which he conceives himself to be, but that which he wills himself to be, and since he perceives himself only as he exists, just as he wills himself to be after being thrown into existence, man is nothing other than what he makes of himself. This is the first principle of existentialism."

Amalgamating the works of these scholars may be folly, and I accept that my own subjective biases may arise in the following attempt at a "unified" definition of existential philosophy: Existential philosophy is primarily concerned with the uniqueness of what it is like to be human (Cooper, 1990). It is a collection of (sometimes loosely) associated works of philosophy and fiction with some scholars suggesting that art may be the more useful medium through which to convey its messages (Kaufman, 1965). Existentialism values freedom and extolls the virtue of authenticity (Thomas, 2006). One of the most influential modern existential thinkers argues that humans are what they think themselves to be, but more importantly they are

that which they do after being thrown into existence. People are what they make of themselves. Alienation with self, others, and the world is an important theme.

Existential Philosophers

This is not an exhaustive list, but rather a brief review of some of the philosophers and writers who have been mentioned by the vast majority of scholars as influential in existential philosophical thought. I could have in all reality added 3 or 30 individuals. I chose Kierkegaard as he is often given the title “first” existentialist. Heidegger created the four-worlds model, and Sartre heavily influenced Emmy van Deurzen the modern scholar who has written about the model. Adding a brief review of Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Kafka, Beckett, de Beauvoir, and the countless additional authors, playwrights, musicians, and philosophers might be fun reading, but unnecessary to an understanding of the philosophy. See Kaufmann’s (1965) work for a collection of writings that are often considered important to the philosophy. There are several other collections available.

Søren Kierkegaard’s was a Danish philosopher born in 1813. Kierkegaard was interested in questions of morality and having a personal relationship with God. Kierkegaard writes that existence is all about a “striving” and a “becoming” (which would later be taken up by existential psychologists like Rollo May) and believed people to be “aliens” in their world. He suggested that an acceptance of our inherent “homelessness” is the starting point for a true and deep relationship with the good – in his case with God (Cooper, 1990). Kierkegaard was first and foremost a Christian, though he pushed against the dominant belief in a relationship with God through the church and argued for a more intimate relationship with the Creator. He railed against contemporary Christian dogma that pushed humans to act in such a way as to achieve the

reward of heaven or avoid the punishment of hell arguing instead for authentic, intentional goodness (Watkin, 2000).

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) was a German philosopher who coined several key terms used in existential philosophy. Heidegger was a pupil of another famous thinker and proponent of phenomenological thought – Husserl. Husserl’s phenomenology is based on the idea that all human experience is based on intentionality. Human experience is always situational, contextual, and subjective. Abstract objectivity is impossible in phenomenological thinking – truth is always subjective and based on one’s perspective and beliefs (van Deurzen, 2005). The search for objective, absolute truth is antithetical to Phenomenology. See my introduction and discussion sections for expansion on the tension between humanities and science for further exploration of this idea. Heidegger wrote of “*dasein*” or “being there” which is a unique way that humans exist. Heidegger named and explored the concept that many writers previously had touched upon. Humans are the only beings concerned with their own being (Bonevac, 2014).

Perhaps ironically for this study, Heidegger argued that both scientists and philosophers are too concerned with the “cataloging the furniture of the universe” when they should be more concerned with the *meaning* of our world and our lives. Heidegger suggests that we should not be concerned with classification or the surface content of life, but focus on the underlying purpose and meaning of our existence. Being/existing does not inherently bestow meaning to objects or processes. A hammer is for driving nails, a hat is for wearing. An object is understood in the meaning it has to its user. Things do not hold intrinsic properties (Bonevac, 2014).

Heidegger’s work is important for this study as he initially created the concept of the three worlds of *umwelt*, *mitwelt*, and *eigenwelt* as a philosophical map for understanding universal human existence. See the *existential worlds* section for detailed review of this model.

Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) took the concept of the absence of intrinsic meaning and applied it to human life. His classic aphorism, “L’existence precede l’essence” or “existence precedes essence” (Sartre, 1949) is perhaps the clearest and simplest explanation to the question of “What is existential philosophy?”. Existence precedes essence. Humans are not born with intrinsic worth or purpose; humans make and earn worth and create meaning and purpose through a life well lived. He writes, “We simply are, without any such constraints making us exist in any particular fashion, and it is only later that we come to accord our existence to any essence” (Reynolds, 2014). Sartre writes that we are not *given* meaning, we must *create* it ourselves.

What is it Like to Be Human?

This study will primarily concern itself with the first and perhaps most fundamental tenet proposed by Cooper (1990): existentialism is primarily concerned with what it is like to *be* human. A criticism of traditional philosophy that existentialism attempts to push against is that traditional philosophy is “bloodless” – it is concerned with *how* we know what is true, *what* is true, and how we can *get* more truth. Traditional philosophy skips over perhaps the most fundamental question – what is it *like* to exist. I’ve found Rollo May’s (1983 p.83) examples in *The Discovery of Being* to be the clearest explanation of this philosophical stance.

...The existence of the given individual has to be left out of the picture [referencing other philosophies]. For example, we can demonstrate that three apples added to three make six. But this would be just as true if we substituted unicorns for apples; it makes no difference to the mathematical truth of the proposition whether apples or unicorns actually exist or not. Reality makes a difference to the person who

has the apples – that is the existential side... For a more serious example, that all men die is a truth; and to say that such and such a percentage die at such and such ages gives a statistical accuracy to the proposition. But neither of these statements says anything about the fact which really matters most to each of us – namely, that you and I must alone face the fact that at some unknown moment in the future we shall die.

Existentialism is not anti-science (Thomas, 2006). The philosophy is simply positing that science is located *within* the category “ways to know truth” which is a different question than what existentialism is primarily concerned with: what is it *like* to be? Facts and figures can describe life in an abstract way, but often leave out the subjective and are inadequate to describe the phenomenological experience. In fact, science is often concerned with removing the self from the perspective. What is considered “true” is often the least subjective. This is useful for comparing which jet engines do not disintegrate mid-air, but perhaps less useful when exploring our human condition.

Rollo May’s (1983) *The Discovery of Being* provides us this beautiful statement, “In Eastern languages, such as Japanese, adjectives always include the implication of for-me-ness. That is to say, “this flower is beautiful” means “for me this flower is beautiful. Our Western dichotomy between subject and object has led us to assume that we have said most if we state that the flower is beautiful entirely divorced from ourselves, as though a statement were the more true in proportion to how little we ourselves have to do with it.”

This statement touches on two important aspects of the theory, the non-duality of subject and experience and also the *experience of being* is valid as much if not more than knowing or

espousing an “objective fact” about the world. Craig (1988) writes, “According to both Heidegger and Boss, forms of dualistic thinking...which predominate in the modern natural-scientific *Zeitgeist*, threaten us with the possibility of becoming alienated from our own fundamental constitution as human beings and also, therefore, with the possibility of being denied the opportunity for encountering our own-most essence.”

Existential philosophy is concerned with what human life is *like*. This inevitably then begs the question: How can one explore what it is like to be human? And also, how can one make it like to be something *better*? The latter question is one of the primary questions posed by the applied psychology fields. Applied psychology has translated this question in many ways: how to “allow one’s self to unfold” (Rogers, 1980); how to “optimize happiness” (Kahneman, 1999); activate “flow state” (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2014), how to *increase* wellness (various psychologists); how to *decrease* pathology, etc. Different flavors of existential psychotherapy ask this question in different ways while retaining the philosophical value in understanding what it is like to exist as a human.

Existential Psychotherapy

Adams (2014) reminds us that many existential philosophers intended the philosophy itself to be a practical endeavor, thus it was only natural that psychologists have incorporated it into clinical work. But similar to how the philosophy “existentialism” is often referred to as a “tendency” without much cohesion, (Cooper, 1990), existential psychology is often understood more a “philosophy about” or “approach to” psychotherapy than an actual system of psychotherapy (Prochaska, & Norcross, 2007; Yalom, 1980; van Deurzen, 2005). In his work, *Practicing existential therapy: The relational world*, Spinelli (2014) writes, “When considering existential therapy, it is difficult not to conclude that there are as many unique expressions of

existential therapy as there are unique beings who engage in and practice it. Thus, it is something of a challenge to claim, much less provide evidence for, the existence of shared underlying Principles in the practice of existential therapy – unless one were to argue that the one governing Principle was that of rejecting any foundational Principles.”

Yalom (1980, p. 5) states, “existential psychotherapy is a dynamic approach to therapy which focuses on concerns that are rooted in an individual’s existence.” Van Deurzen (2012, p. 17) writes, “Existential counseling can be seen as a process of exploration of what can make life *meaningful*.” Thomas Szasz (2005, p. 127) writes “Existential psychotherapy is a form of psychotherapy which aims at enhancing self-knowledge in the client and allows them to be the authors of their own lives...its philosophical roots are to be found in the works of Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre and other existential thinkers.”

According to Correia, Cooper, and Berdondini (2014), therapy incorporating existential thought has been growing in popularity worldwide. In their study on the worldwide distribution of existential counselors, approximately 128 existential therapy institutions were located in 42 countries with 1,264 existential clinicians from 48 different countries responding to their call for counselors who identify as existential. Correia, Cooper, and Berdondini (2014) conclude, “This worldwide relevance of existential therapy should reinforce the importance to develop further research upon this psychotherapeutic paradigm.”

In their article, *Existential Therapies: A Review of Their Scientific Foundations and Efficacy*, Vos, Cooper, Correia, and Craig (2015) write, “Compared to other psychotherapies, little research is conducted on existential therapies, and most of the available studies use a qualitative or phenomenological method and/or describe only one case.” They go on to write, “existential concepts are difficult to study and operationalize: existential therapists have often

steered away from formulating and standardizing techniques” (Vos et. al., 2015). The difficulty in operationalizing existential therapy may be both the biggest concern, but also a potential source of strength in its clinical application. *Freedom* is a concept that is incredibly important within the philosophy (Szasz, 2005; Frankl, 1985). Van Deurzen (2012) addresses this very concern by noting the meta-idea that existential counseling/psychotherapy is one of the most “free” forms of therapy in that it is not prescriptive or manualized. This freedom allows the existential psychologist to go where the client is, not where we want them to be.

The Practice of Existential Therapy

Existentialist counseling/ psychotherapy is unique in that it has its genesis in pure philosophical literature. Founders of various theoretical orientations used extant philosophy and literature in the creation of their theory, few theoretical orientations are cut whole cloth from a philosophy. There are a few with very clear philosophical roots. For example, Aaron Beck, one of the primary founders of cognitive behavioral therapy, asserted that cognitive behavioral therapy has its roots in the stoic philosophy (Beck, 1979). Most certainly he was referring to Epictetus. Epictetus, a stoic philosopher, believed that nothing lies entirely in our control except our judgment, desires, and goals. Consequently, logic could be used to identify and destroy false or harmful beliefs which in turn lead to unwanted emotions. (Robertson, 2010). Depending on how the authors and educators divide orientations, existentialism is often the only orientation holding such a distinction.

Defining exactly what existential therapy is has been a topic of much debate. Vos, Cooper, Correia, and Craig (2015) suggest that there is evidence for existential practices being broken down into three major foci of practice: 1) *phenomenological* practice, 2) *relational* practice, and practices 3) *informed by existential assumptions*.

Phenomenological practices based on the philosophy of Husserl, focus on a client's subjective experience with the goal of helping them to gain greater insight and self-awareness. Much of this type of practice can be seen as falling within the humanistic practice of empathy. There are over fifty studies demonstrating that empathic engagement demonstrates moderately strong therapeutic effects (Vos, Cooper, Correia, and Craig, 2015). Phenomenology and phenomenological practices are heavily represented in existential literature (Sharf, 2008). Phenomenologists are interested in metaphorically "getting out of the way". They want to ensure that their subjective experience including beliefs, biases, and theories do not encumber their understanding of clients that they encounter. May writes, "As a practicing therapist and teacher of therapists, I have been struck by how often our concern with trying to understand the mechanisms by which [the client's] behaviors take place blocks our understanding of what they are really experiencing" (May, 1983 p.24). Like the philosophy, the practice is concerned with what it is like to *be*, with the twist that we are concerned with what it is like to *be another* as a tool or stepping stone toward healing another.

Yalom's (1980) definition of existential psychotherapy from his classic work, *Existential Psychotherapy* is intimately connected with the phenomenological perspective, "Existential psychotherapy is a dynamic approach to therapy which focuses on concerns that are rooted in the individual's existence." Existentialism emphasizes the lived, subjective, phenomenological existence of a person. Various themes have become associated with the philosophy throughout the years, but subjective human existence is almost always the starting point. Human existence is a concept that can be explored and understood through a variety of lenses It is a concept that lives at the intersection of psychology, biology, anthropology, and philosophy.

Relational practices focus on creating an authentic, congruent, real relationship with the client. Therapists often reflect upon the relationship and analyze it. Here-and-now, authentic reactions to clients, self-disclosure, relational skills are all part of this focus. The authentic relationship is noted as an incredibly important aspect of existential therapy by several researchers (Sharf, 2008; Prochaska & Norcross, 2010). Authenticity is understood to mean congruence between inner self and behaviors. Wood et. Al (2008) suggest that this congruence is one of the most important facets of the three facets of authenticity (authenticity, self-alienation, and accepting external influence).

The APA Task Force devoted to exploring what particular aspects of therapeutic relationships are empirically supported found that, “Across twenty studies... *68% of them found a positive result when congruence was tested in concert with empathy and positive regard, supporting the notion that the facilitative conditions work together and cannot be easily distinguished.* Therapist congruence is higher when therapists have more self-confidence, good mood, increased involvement, good mood, responsiveness, smoothness of speaking exchanges and when clients have high levels of self-exploration/ experiencing” (Ackerman et al., 2001).

Practices informed by existential assumptions can revolve around themes of freedom, choice, responsibility, death, and existential anxiety (Vos, Cooper, Correia, and Craig, 2015). Modern psychological texts continue to cite power, freedom, responsibility, and discussion of life and death as main tenants of existential psychotherapy (Sharf, 2008). Vos, Cooper, Correia, & Craig (2015) completed a systematic review and meta-analysis of existential therapy studies published between 1970 and 2011. Clients receiving meaning-oriented therapy showed significant improvements in meaning-in-life, level of psychopathology, and self-efficacy compared to other treatments. They note that five qualitative studies provided similar results.

They acknowledge that despite the small number of studies, clients appear to obtain significant benefits from existential therapy.

Existential psychotherapy involves an attempt to connect an individual with reality in such a way that they accept the givens of life and attempt to live a life that is authentic within the bounds of existence. A variety of outcomes have been proposed for what existential psychotherapy should produce. Van Deurzen says, "...the fundamental objective of existential work is to enable people to rediscover their own values, beliefs and their life's purpose." (van Deurzen, 2012, p. 12). Many other existential psychotherapists echo van Deurzen in their belief that connection with one's values and a life lived in which these values are manifest is key to living an existential life.

Viktor Frankl, holocaust survivor and author of the famous book *Man's Search for Meaning* (1985) articulates this in his statement, "Ultimately, [people] should not ask what the meaning of [their] life is, but rather must recognize that it is [they] who is asked. In a word, each [person] is questioned by life; and [they] can only answer to life by answering for [their] own life; to life [they] can only respond by being responsible." This life that we live here and now should be the focus of our energy and efforts. Life is intrinsically meaningless, but we have the ability to create meaning. This ability brings with it a great power and responsibility which is bounded by the existential givens of death and suffering. Modern existential psychotherapists have detailed the givens of existence which contribute towards suffering and mental illness.

Irving Yalom (1989) writes, "Four givens are particularly relevant for psychotherapy: the inevitability of death for each of us and for those we love; the freedom to make our lives as we will; our ultimate aloneness; and, finally, the absence of any obvious meaning or sense to life." Acceptance of the givens can lead toward a life lived openly and authentically. We are unable to

live authentically if we are in denial about the fact that we must die someday. We are unable to live authentically and take full responsibility for our acts if we cannot accept that we alone must make decisions.

Daseinanalysis

The daseinanalysis tradition (along with the work of van Deurzen exploring a daseinanalysis-inspired model) is central to this study. Daseinanalysis can become complicated as it evolved in conjunction with, and often in opposition to the psychoanalytic tradition. Dasein is the German word for “existence” though it has shades of meaning in the daseinanalysis tradition including specifically what it is like to exist as a human. Daseinanalysis thus is “existential analysis.”

Heidegger writes, “This entity which each of us is himself...we shall denote by the term dasein” (Heidegger, 1962, p.27). “[Dasein is] that entity which in its Being has this very Being as an issue...” (Heidegger, 1962, p.68). Heidegger argues that problems in the world including war, and destructive scientific progress (think atomic weapons), is so dangerous, is that it is cut off from the study of being – or what it is like to be human. The world and the individuals who inhabit the world are not informed by a *mindful understanding of their own being*. Instead, we often conflate “technological advancements” with “progress” and our very status as a species. In a more personal sense, we often experience pain and turmoil because the metrics of wellness we are using are divorced from our acknowledgement or exploration of what it is like to *be* us. We don’t know what’s “good” for us because we don’t ask what it is like to be us first. This very question is both important for other questions depended upon it, but also important in its own right.

Ludwig Binswanger, a Swedish psychiatrist attempted to put Heidegger's philosophy into psychiatric practice. Binswanger (1963) writes,

Heidegger's phenomenological philosophical analytic of existence is important for psychiatry. This is so because it does not inquire merely into particular regions of phenomena and fact to be found "in human beings" but rather it inquires into the *being of [person] as a whole*.

Daseinanalysis is at its heart an exploration of what it is like to be a human in a holistic way. Boss and Binswanger conceptualized daseinanalysis to be thought of more as an ontological position about psychological care than an orientation. Craig (1988) writes:

At the heart of this ontology, inspiring it and providing its most original ground, is a recognition of the pure wonder of existence. There are two "wonders" in particular which form the foundation for daseinanalysis. The first is the wonder of Being itself, the very fact that there is something at all when there could just as easily be nothing; and the second is the wonder that, within this Beingness as such, there is such a being as Dasein, such a being as the human being whose existence provides the clearing for all that it encounters to appear and be revealed.

These two wonders of Being-ness as such and of our human capacity for perceiving and understanding all that appears within our own existence, are rarely even noticed in the bustle of everyday life.

By applying this philosophy of daseinanalysis to the practice of psychological care, Binswanger and Boss suggested that the therapist does not need to reduce every moment of interaction to unconscious defense and repetition of unconstructive behavior (as per psychoanalysis). This anti-reductionist stance allows the therapist to see more and see more of what is real and important to the client, not the therapist. (Craig, 1988).

Therapists can substitute the question of “why” for “why not” to explore the *limitations* one places on oneself. This is also an attempt to accept freedom and responsibility more fully and also to look not just at the past but toward the future. The client is allowed freedom to find their own meaning with the therapist “getting out of the way” with heavy-handed, theory-laden interpretations. In fact, one of the criticisms of daseinanalysis is that it is “empty” or devoid of structural theory. Authentic existence is allowed to unfold just as it is without the therapist imposing values or theory.

Our genuine dasein is uncovered through authentically living within these several givens including: “temporality, spatiality, coexistence, mood or attunement, historicity, bodyhood, and mortality” (Weckowicz, 1981). These givens are universal not located entirely “within” a person, but at the intersection of the person and world. Daseinanalysis rejects classic internal psychoanalytic structures of “ego”, “psyche” or any need for balkanization or reducing or separating. The person and the world are “inextricably interwoven in the world” (Weckowicz, 1981).

The daseinanalysis tradition holds that it is impossible to explain the wholeness or entirety of existence – the only way is to look at “partial phenomena” (Boss, 1963). The four worlds model was born out of this paradox of recognizing that human experience is holistic, phenomenological and incomprehensibly vast, but that we may have to “slice the cake” in a

certain way in order to understand how to eat it. Van Deurzen (2005) states, “The vista of human experiences is so vast and diverse that it is impossible to do justice to it...The four-worlds offer a framework from which to map out an individual’s experience.”

The Existential Worlds

The four-worlds model is also popular in introductory counseling psychology texts. Taught to counseling and psychology students in just about every introduction to existential counseling and psychotherapy textbook including Sharf (2015) and Prochaska and Norcross (2018), the Four “*Worlds*” or “*Ways of Being*” or “*Modes of the World*” are interconnected dimensions in which humans experience the world.

This model was first explicated by Heidegger (1927) then imported by Binswanger (1963), and expanded upon by several psychologists including Yalom (1980), May, (1983), and van Deurzen (2005). These worlds are universal dimensions in which we must exist as human beings. We all must breathe and eat (physical). We all must live in a cultural human world (social world). We all have inner thoughts and inner lives (psychological world). And we all have some fundamental beliefs about the world and all make meaning of things (philosophical/spiritual world). These four dimensions are (in German): *umwelt*, *mitwelt*, *eigenwelt*, and *uberwelt*. Weckowicz, (1981, p.4) writes a good summation of the worlds:

The *Umwelt* is our biological and environmental existence. Our *Mitwelt* is our “with-world,” or relational world, which entails the quality of “being-with” in our relationships (i.e., close, distant, conflictual, etc.). Our *Eigenwelt* is our lived experience, which is the unique ways we experience ourselves living through situations. No one mode of existence dominates and takes priority over any of the other two. No one mode of existence can be extracted from the other

two. Pain, stress, and hypertension are examples of how the three modes of existence mutually shape and are shaped by the other two. Our integrated, equiprimordial comportment through our everydayness always and already finds itself within the integrated existential givens in the world. The world is not a place to locate persons and things, but a web of meaning and backdrop against which aspects of our lives come to make sense to us, come to disclose themselves to us.

Just like all theory, every theorist who touches the four-worlds leaves their own footprints. As there are many flavors of the four worlds, I was tasked with choosing one “version”. As van Deurzen is one of the most modern scholars of the model and “added” the fourth world, hers was the version that I deferred to in the creation of scale items, though I admit to some eclecticism – attempting to pull the “spirit” of the worlds from various authors. Rollo May was one of these authors.

The Physical World (Umwelt) is German for “around World.” Van Deurzen defines this world as “The natural world with its physical biological dimension, where the person is likely to behave in an instinctual manner” (Van Deurzen, 2012). Rollo May defines it as the “...biological world, generally called in our day the environment (May, 1983). Van Deurzen’s suggests that each human has several challenges or concerns within in the physical world: *Nature* (life and death), *Things* (pleasure and pain), *Own Body* (health and illness), *Cosmos* (harmony and chaos).

The Social World (Mitwelt) is German for “with the world” Van Deurzen’s defines this world as “People’s experience is embedded in a social, political and cultural environment ...Social connections in particular those of ordinary everyday encounters in public with others

are a part of this world as are intimate relationships to some extent” (Van Deurzen, 2012).

Rollo May’s defines it as: “The world of interpersonal relationships (May, 1983). Van Deurzen’s challenges or concerns in this dimension include: “*Society* (Love and hate), *Others* (dominance and submission), *Ego* (acceptance and rejection), and *Culture* (belonging and isolation).

The Personal/Psychological World (*Eigenwelt*) is German for “own world.” Van Deurzen’s defines it as “The private world is the land of intimacy. It includes intimacy with self and intimacy with close others... who we bring into this world” (Van Deurzen, 2012). Rollo May says of this dimension: “The self in relation to the self” (May, 1983). Van Deurzen’s Challenges in this world include: *Person* (identity and freedom), *Me* (strength and weakness), *Self* (integrity and disintegration), and *Consciousness* (confidence and confusion).

The Spiritual World (*Uberwelt*) is German for “over world” Van Deurzen’s definition: “Person’s connection to the abstract and metaphysical aspects of living” (Van Deurzen, 2012). Van Deurzen’s challenges: *Infinite* (good and evil), *Ideas* (truth and untruth), *Spirit* (meaning and futility), and *Conscience* (right and wrong).”

The first three worlds: *Umwelt* (physical), *Mitwelt* (social), and *Eigenwelt* (psychological) were introduced into modern psychological literature by Ludwig Binswanger in 1962. The fourth, *Uberwelt* (spiritual/philosophical world) was introduced by Emmy Van Deurzen in the early 2000s. In 2005, van Deurzen published *Existential Perspectives on Human Issues* in which the four-worlds were the classification system for each piece of psychological work included.

Binswanger’s “worlds” were initially adapted from Heidegger’s (1927) work mainly *On Being and Time*. Binswanger expounds upon Heidegger’s classic works and attempts to make Heidegger’s philosophy useful to Binswanger’s work as a psychiatrist in the 1960s. In

Binswanger's paper titled *Heidegger's Analytic of Existence and Its Meaning for Psychiatry*, Binswanger lays out a case for the cooption of Heidegger's existential philosophy by psychiatry. He explores the limitations of his contemporaneous psychiatry arguing against the reductionism of the modern times. He argues for the use of Heidegger's system of exploring existence as a way to understand our phenomenological existence.

“In practice, whenever the psychiatrist himself tries to look beyond the limitations of his science and seeks to know the ontological grounds of his understanding and treatment of those placed in his care, it is Heidegger's analytic of existence that can broaden his horizon. For it offers the possibility of understanding man as both a creature of nature, and a socially determined or historical being – and this by means of *one* ontological insight, which thus obviates the separation of body, mind and spirit.”

Again, I acknowledge the sometimes paradoxical need in this work to explore a philosophy of holism in a somewhat reductionistic way. I see this as a limitation of current scientific tools, not as a limitation of the theory. Thus, I needed to “break” the model down into parts to study it- exploring each world individually with the hope that science and psychometrics may someday offer more complete tools

Rollo May (1983) stated that humans live in all the worlds simultaneous and they are by no means different worlds but three simultaneous modes of being in the world. We are both physical beings and social beings at the same time – a flesh and blood body talking to another flesh and blood body in a social way with our own unique inner worlds. The worlds are a way to help us *understand* the dimensions of our being. Clinically, they can be a tool to help clients

explore areas in which they may be “out of balance” and thus existential psychotherapy can assist and individual find balance (Van Deurzen, 2012).

The use of the worlds within the science of psychology is a pushing against the reductionistic conceptualization of humanity proposed by others – namely the behaviorists. In this way existential psychology serves a similar function within psychology as existential philosophy serves fighting against the “bloodless” traditional philosophies. May’s (1983 p 127) writing has a clear humanistic agenda opposing the prevailing medical model in his discussion of the worlds. He writes, “The existential analysts [and specifically the worlds model] are more empirical – that is more respectful of actual human phenomena than the mechanists or positivists or behaviorists.” This is an echo of Binswanger’s words (1963 p. 3) “Heidegger’s phenomenological philosophical analytic of existence is important for psychiatry. This is so because it does not inquire merely into particular regions of phenomena and fact to be found ‘in human beings’ but rather it inquiries into the *being of man as a whole*. We are certainly physical beings as we exist in the *umwelt*; however, we are not *just* physical beings. An understanding of humanity as automations or human behavior as solely determined by conditioning does violent disservice for the complexity of our existence. We exist as physical beings, psychological beings, and social beings at the same time, with different permutations being more or less important depending on context.”

Van Deurzen was the first to explicitly propose the fourth “spiritual/philosophical world”. She argues that its existence was implied by several historical philosophers and psychologists including Binswanger, Boss, Tillich, and Jaspers. Van Deurzen suggests that the worlds can be best understood as ways in which we *relate* to the world. In the physical level we relate to things in the world, in the social level we relate to other people, at the personal level we relate to

ourselves and in the spiritual (philosophical) level we relate to the ideas that make sense of the world.

Related Models in Healthcare and Psychology

The biopsychosocial model is used often in modern health psychology and physical health care (Hatala, 2012). The model was proposed by George Engle in 1977 (Engle, 1977) and stood in opposition to the reductionistic bio-medical model which was the prevailing model of the time. The biopsychosocial model is a holistic systems model in which biological, social, and psychological factors are considered in the assessment, treatment, and outcome study of clients in several fields including medicine and health psychology. Currently, there is pressure to add a spiritual dimension to the model. In 1999 the WHO voted to add a spiritual dimension to the conceptualization of health. Many researchers have offered evidence that a spiritual dimension is an important variable in assessing health outcomes (Katerndahl, 2008). Many practitioners have begun to call the model the biopsychosocial spiritual model.

There are obvious parallels between the existential worlds and the biopsychosocial model within the healthcare industry. There are many nuances of course, but each “world” based in existential theory maps fairly well onto each dimension of the biopsychosocial spiritual model - one of the prevailing models of health service delivery. What a person values or finds important can help practitioners explore domains in which a person is “well” and also domains in which a person is neglecting or focusing too much on. A criticism of the biopsychosocial model from a humanistic/existential perspective is its focus on deficits. The model is most often used to explore the way diseases may begin and manifest in the different dimensions. Additionally, it lacks the nuance and focus on ways of being. The biopsychosocial model can be thought of as that “cataloging” of the universe that Heidegger railed against – the “things” within each field

impact a person. Toxic pollution within the physical sphere *causes* cancer. Poor connections with others *causes* depression in the social sphere. The biopsychosocial model lacks the presupposition that a person is not just responding to each sphere but is a being *existing within, relating to, and experiencing* the world within each dimension.

Operationalization of the Four-Worlds

The VEW measures four constructs based on these four-worlds 1) the value of living in the physical world 2) the value of living in the social world 3) the value of living in the psychological world and 4) the value of living in the meaning-making world. Each construct will be operationalized using mainly the work of Van Deurzen's modern explication of the four-worlds. Each construct measures how much a person values (how much importance is placed) on existing within a particular world.

Umwelt

In the Value of living in the physical world (umwelt) participants identify how important it is to them that they think, behave, acknowledge, accept, do, and be, in certain ways that tap into existence in the physical world. The aggregate *Importance of the Physical World Scale* assesses how valuable (important) a person thinks it will be to exist in the world of physical and biological experiences. A person who scores high on this scale will strongly value their existence within the physical world. They will be attuned to their own physical world including bodily sensations, the weather, and nature. They will be more accepting of their "animal nature" and to have considered that their body is mortal.

Umwelt is the most fundamental of all worlds as human existence is "clearly anchored in our physical presence in a material and natural world" (Van Deurzen, 2012 p 76). Bodily awareness of the whole range of physical sensations, body image, nature, objects, fitness,

weakness, sex, and death are all components of our physical world. Death and acceptance of mortality are of particular importance in the literature . Heidegger states that we are “beings-toward-death” Heidegger, M. (1927). Yalom (1989) writes that confrontations with mortality can have positive, liberating effects, facilitating growth and life satisfaction. A meta-analysis of modern existentialists include discussions about death as one of the “main tenants” of modern existential psychotherapy (Vos, Cooper, Correia, and Craig, 2015).

In Hamlet, Shakespeare writes, “...for in that sleep of death what dreams may come when we have shuffled off this mortal coil...” Heidegger avoided the subject of human existence relying on biological mechanisms, but modern existential thinkers have begun to discuss the biological physical nature of human existence. Ernest Becker (1974) writes that humans are “gods with anuses”. Solomon, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski (2015) write about how much of time on earth is spent denying this “creatureliness” of human existence because being reminded of our flesh and blood nature reminds of our own eventual death which produces anxiety. Acceptance of this physical dimension of our existence - and balance with other dimensions - is an important part of an authentic existence.

Mitwelt

In the *Value of Existing in the Social World*, the participant will answer on a Likert-type scale how important it is to them that they think, behave, acknowledge, accept, do, and be, in certain ways that tap into existence in the social world. The aggregate *Importance of the Social World Scale* assesses how valuable (important) a person thinks it will be to exist in the world of interpersonal relationships, culture, and society . A person who scores high on this scale will strongly value their existence within the social world. They will be attuned to their own and other’s place within the world of people and culture.

Eigenwelt

In the *Value of Existing in the Psychological World*, the participant will answer on a Likert-type scale how important it is to them that they think, behave, acknowledge, accept, do, and be, in certain ways that tap into existence in their inner, psychological world. The aggregate *Importance of the Psychological World Scale* assesses how valuable (important) a person thinks it will be to exist in the world of their own thoughts, ideas, private time, and personal space . A person who scores high on this scale will strongly value their existence within their own inner world. They will be attuned to their self and have stronger sense of self.

Uberwelt

In the *Value of Existing in the Meaning-Making World*, the participant will answer on a Likert-type scale how important it is to them that they think, behave, acknowledge, accept, do, and be, in certain ways that tap into existence in the more abstract world of making meaning. The aggregate *Importance of the Meaning-Making World Scale* assesses how valuable (important) a person thinks it will be to exist in the world of connecting to the more abstract and metaphysical ways of living – from meaningful rituals, spirituality, and making personal meaning from their life.

A person who scores high on this scale will strongly value their existence within their philosophical world. They will be attuned to aspects and concepts beyond their physical, mental, and social lives. These aspects can include beauty, truth, morality, and meaning. I hypothesize that this construct will be positively correlated to The Seeking of Noetic Goals (Crumbaugh, 1977) and The Purpose in Life Short Form (Schulenberg, Schnetzer, & Buchanan, 2010).

Values

This measure construction project uses “values” as a way to conceptualize how individuals express the importance of each dimension of existence. Values have been defined in psychological literature as general beliefs about *priorities* that guide the selection or evaluation of behavior (Schwartz’s 1992). Values are one way that humans “prioritize” choices that they have. Values are important for both the psychometric design of this project – participants will express the level of importance a concept or behavior is for them within a dimension of existence using *value* as the scale dimension language. More broadly, values are important theoretically within the existential tradition.

Within many psychotherapeutic traditions such as humanistic, existential, and more modern theories such as acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), it is understood that if psychotherapists are to help individuals capitalize on strength and move toward goals, they must first know in which direction(s) the client wants to go (Hayes, 2016). Values are one of the pathways toward exploring the direction that a client wants and needs to go.

Values help explain beliefs and attitudes and predict behavior (de Groot & Steg, 2008). Client values can provide direction and motivation for the difficult work in counseling (Wilson & Murrell, 2004). Values are also believed to provide some of the motivation for accepting and persisting when confronted with barriers (Lundgren, Luoma, & Strosahl, 2012). It has also been noted that living in concordance with values may contribute to well-being more than mood state (Lundgren, Luoma, & Strosahl, 2012). Research suggests that pursuing goals that are in line with one’s values contributes more to well-being than other goal-oriented activity (Steger, Kashdan & Oishi, 2008). Research also suggests that values work in psychotherapy has been

linked to improved therapeutic alliance (Wilson, Sandoz, Kitchens, & Roberts, 2010) and meaning-oriented therapies which include values work may offer significant improvement in self-efficacy, level of psychopathology and meaning-in-life (Vos, Cooper, Correia, & Craig, 2015).

As several researchers have noted, there is a dearth of extant psychological literature regarding the construct *values* (Lundgren, Luoma, Dahl, Strosahl, & Melin, 2012). Like many constructs in psychology, values have fallen in and out of favor within the literature. *Values* have been defined in the psychological literature in a number of ways (Wilson, Sandoz, Kitchens & Roberts, 2010). Values have been defined as general beliefs about priorities in life that guide people's action. (Caprara, Alessandri, & Eisenberg, 2012). A value has also been defined as "a desirable trans-situational goal varying in importance, which serves as a guiding principle in the life of a person or other social entity" (Schwartz, 1992, p. 21). A value reflects a belief on the desirability of a certain end-state and "...a belief upon which a [person] acts by preference" (Allport, 1963 p. 454).

Thus, for the purposes of the proposed study, Schwartz's (1992) definition of values will be used as the operational definition of values. Values are made up of five components: 1. a belief, 2. pertains to desirable end states or modes of conduct 3. transcends specific situations 4. guides selection or evaluation of behavior, people and events and 5. is ordered by importance relative to other values to form a system of priorities. Schwartz notes that these are the formal features that distinguish a value from other constructs such as needs or attitudes.

A desire to succeed on a test may be pertain to a certain end goal, but it may not transcend a specific situation. A desire to be educated more generally; however, may be a value that meets all of the criteria. One can *believe* that education is important; understand that

education is an outcome that the individual wants to pursue (*a desirable end state*); hold this belief in multiple contexts; use this belief *to guide one's action* toward higher education; and *be ordered by importance* relative to other values (a desire to get married may be ordered higher).

Related Extant Measures

Several measures exist to explore constructs similar to value of worlds. A full list of the measures that were given along with the VEW for this study including all their subscales and their psychometric properties is included in the methods section. But before hypotheses can be reviewed, a brief overview of these measures must be provided. The Brief Locus of Control Scale (Lumpkin, 1985) measures *locus of control* or “how strongly individuals feel that they have control over situations and experiences in their lives.” The Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008) Self-Alienation subscale purports to measure the disparity between conscious awareness and actual experience (e.g. how much someone is aware of what is going on and what is actually going on). The Spiritual Meaning Scale (Mascaro, Rosen, & Morey, 2003) is defined as “the extent to which an individual believes that life or some force of which life is a function has a purpose, will, or way in which individuals participate.” Simply, how much does a person believe that life can have purpose or be meaningfully participated in. The New Ecological Paradigm Revised Version (Dunlap et al., 2000) Antianthropocentrism subscale assesses “...the belief that nature exist primarily for human use and has no inherent value of its own” (Dunlap et al., 2000, p. 431). Simply, how much does the physical world (nature) exist simply as a tool for people.

The Purpose in Life Test Crumbaugh and Maholick, 1969) purports to measure how much existential meaning in life one has. The Social Well-Being Scale (Keys, 1998) purports to measure the degree of well-being a person has from an interpersonal perspective. The Brief Measure of the Big Five Personality (Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann, 2003) purports to measure

how much of each of the “big five” traits (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience) a person has.

The Self-Compassion Scale Short Form (Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011). Neff (2015, p.6) writes, “Isolation refers to the assumption that one should be perfect, that imperfection is somehow abnormal, that I am the only one who has failed, made a mistake, or is suffering in some way. It most closely resembles the concept of adolescent ego-centrism discussed in developmental psychology which often manifests as the personal fable, the belief that one’s personal experience is unique and unrelated to that of others.” The mindfulness subscale measures how much balance, perspective, and thoughtful awareness one can bring when considering a concern. The Seeking of Noetic Goals Test (Crumbaugh, 1977) explores how much motivation one has toward seeking meaning in their life.

Significance of Study

There are two main ways in which this study could be significant. The first is its introduction of an existential way of gathering data for clients to potentially increase efficacy of psychotherapeutic work. The second is its contribution to attempting to operationalize complex humanistic-existential constructs and to study them using the tools of science.

The existential tradition has been largely left out of the modern movement toward evidenced based treatment (Levitt et al., 2005.) It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore all of the reasons for this oversight, but broadly speaking there are two major impediments preventing existential theory from being operationalized and researched in the same way as a more manualized “treatment” like cognitive behavioral therapy. Firstly, humanistic theories tend to be built upon more nebulous constructs and nuanced outcome variables. Wellness, freedom, identity formation, and emotional experience are much less easy to operationalize and research.

This by no means suggests that they are less *useful*, just that they are more *difficult* to research. In their exploration of outcome variables in treatment Levitt et al. (2005) write broadly that outcome measures used in psychotherapy efficacy studies often do not assess central humanistic concepts and “using them [traditional outcome measures] to assess humanistic approaches is akin to weighing oranges with thermometers”.

Secondly, humanistic traditions, especially existential approaches tend to place a premium on individual, holistic, phenomenological experience. This orientation towards holism both intentionally (Thomas Szasz, 2005) and unintentionally (Levitt et al., 2005) tends to be a counterbalance to the movement toward physicalism/medicalization of psychological concerns. The existential worlds are a classic example of model that is part of the rich existential tradition that has been touched by many theorists but not by many researchers. There has never been an empirical study that has attempted to operationalize, and measure values associated with the four-worlds.

Although “pure” humanistic-existential theory and practice may be losing ground, therapy *informed* by existential literature has been growing in popularity worldwide (Correia, Cooper, & Berdondini, 2014). With this paradoxical growth in popularity coming during the push toward multicultural competence, it is important to incorporate the diverse voices from within the tradition. Many of the scales exploring existential constructs were created from the perspective of a single (White/European) philosophical tradition within existentialism. With a push toward multicultural and interdisciplinary perspectives in modern counseling, it is important for psychologists to be aware that existential psychotherapy includes many voices including women, African Americans, and other perspectives apart from the traditional white European male perspective.

One final thought on the “problems” within existential psychotherapy is the constriction of theoretical diversity *within* the existing existential measures. Existential psychotherapy has been broadly divided into four “schools” (van Deurzen, 2005): Daseinanalysis, Logotherapy, Existential-humanistic, and the British School. Most measures that have some demonstrated psychometric validity (and some of the most famous ones) are based in Frankl’s logotherapeutic school. These including the Purpose in Life Test, Seeking of Noetic Goals, and the Existence Scale. In addition to these measures being from a specific school within existentialism, they are becoming older and outdated. The Purpose in Life Test (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964) measures perceived meaning in life (Schulenberg, Schnetzere, & Buchanan, 2010). The Seeking of Noetic Goals Test (Crumbaugh, 1977) measures the motivation to find meaning (Schulenberg, Schnetzere, & Buchanan, 2010). The Existence Scale (Langle, Orger, & Kundi, 2003) measures the degree of personal fulfillment in one’s existence. The four-worlds measure currently proposed will pull from mainly from Daseinanalysis and van Deurzen’s British school.

Validation of the VEW: Research Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to assess the consistency and validity of the VEW. To explore consistency, estimates of internal reliability were completed. To examine construct validity, correlational data was obtained exploring how the VEW scales moved with extant scales measuring other constructs. A total of fourteen research hypotheses were posed before the data was collected. These fourteen hypotheses were posed to explore different aspects of construct validity including three hypotheses exploring discriminant and eleven exploring convergent validity.

Discriminant validity is an aspect of validity that can be explored by measuring the correlation of unrelated constructs. To provide evidence for discriminant validity, measures of

constructs that are unrelated to the target construct should be uncorrelated (Campbell, & Fiske, 1959). To explore discriminant validity, three hypotheses were posed: 1) The Social Desirability Scale (Stober, 2001) was predicted to be unrelated to each scale within the VEW (umwelt, mitwelt, eigenwelt, uberwelt). Additionally, 2) The PHQ-9 was hypothesized to be unrelated to each of the VEW scales. Finally, 3) None of the personality dimensions assessed by The Brief Measure of the Big Five were hypothesized to be correlated with any of VEW dimensions except for the hypothesized correlation between extroversion and the mitwelt dimension.

Convergent validity is an aspect of validity that can be explored by measuring the correlation of related constructs. To provide evidence for convergent validity, measures of constructs that are related to the target construct should be significantly correlated in the theoretically predicted direction. Eleven additional hypotheses were posed to explore convergent validity: 4) The Big Five extroversion scale was hypothesized to be correlated positively with the VEW mitwelt scale. 5) The Brief Locus of Control Scale was hypothesized to be significantly positively correlated with the VEW eigenwelt scale. 6) The Authenticity Scale self-alienation subscale was hypothesized to be negatively correlated with the VEW eigenwelt scale. 7) The spiritual meaning scale was hypothesized to be significantly positively correlated with the VEW uberwelt scale. 8) The GAD-7 was hypothesized to be negatively correlated with VEW eigenwelt and uberwelt dimensions. 9) The Antianthropocentrism subscale of the New Ecological Paradigm was theorized to be significantly positively correlated with the VEW umwelt scale. 10) It was hypothesized that the PIL-SF would correlate positively with the VEW eigenwelt and uberwelt dimensions. 11) It was hypothesized that the Social Well-Being Scale social integration subscale would be positively correlated with the VEW mitwelt dimension. 12) It was hypothesized that the Self-Compassion Short Form subscale isolation would be negatively

correlated with VEW mitwelt scale. Additionally, 13) the mindfulness subscale was hypothesized to be positively correlated with the VEW eigenwelt scale. And 14) The SONG was hypothesized to be correlated with the VEW uberwelt scale.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

“The map is not the territory.”

- Alfred Korzybski

In this measure construction project, the Values of Existential Worlds (VEW) was created using the iterative process of measure development as outlined by Devillis (2017). After an initial pool of 100 items were created based on theoretical literature, they were given to a panel of expert reviewers. Based on standardized expert review procedures, the initial pool of 100 items (25 per each world) was then culled down to a pool of 63 items which was given to 264 participants along with twelve other measures in order to obtain data to explore reliability and validity of the new measure. All measures were given online via Qualtrics online software. Reliability of items and constructs was assessed via internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha). Construct validity was assessed through a variety of ways including assessing convergent validity - the constructs correlating positively with measures that should theoretically be tapping similar constructs (e.g. mitwelt construct correlating with The Social Well-Being Scale). Discriminant validity was measured by assessing degree of correlation between measures that should theoretically not correlate (e.g. social desirability and eigenwelt construct). Exploratory factor analysis was run on the data from the sample. Correlations between the existing measures with the VEW subscales were computed and reviewed. The data was then synthesized and compared against hypotheses. Finally, data was interpreted using theory.

Participants

Convenience sampling including the use of social networking sites (Reddit), and requests to relevant Listservs was used to obtain participants in this measure construction/validation project. Two-hundred-sixty-four total participants were recruited in this manner. Participants were adults age 18 and older who have the ability to consent to taking a survey. The only exclusion criteria were age (under 18) and consent which was binary yes/no. Participants were informed about risks which included being asked to think about potentially sensitive questions about themselves including what they believe about their values. Participation was voluntary and participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were offered resources including the Suicide prevention hotline if they noted any psychological distress that may have arisen during or after the study.

According to Russell (2002), with lower communality levels of around .5 obtained through exploratory factor analysis (which was assumed for this first iteration given the abstract nature of the constructs) approximately 100 – 200 participants were needed to authentically reproduce the loadings of factors in a population. Thus, for this study, more than 200 participants were sought before attempting psychometric analysis of the scale. A total of 264 participants completed some portion of the survey. Of these 264 original participants, 61 completed less than 74% of the survey and were removed from the sample. Of the remaining responses, 198 participants completed the survey in its entirety, with 5 participants who completed between 74% and 98% of the survey. These 5 were retained given that they completed the majority of the survey and their responses appeared valid. Of the remaining 203 participants, 1 participant failed both validity checks and was removed from the sample. A final sample of 202 participants was retained for data analysis which meets the best-practice guidelines of Russell (2002).

A total of 8 demographics questions were used to explore demographic variables including: age, gender, ethnicity, relationship status, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, income, and political views. An additional 3 questions explored frequency of engagement in activities/concerns that theoretically relate to physical, psychological, and spiritual/philosophical dimensions.

The sample contained substantially more females ($n = 126, 62.4\%$) than males ($n = 74, 36.6\%$) with 2 individuals identifying as non-binary ($n = 2, 1\%$). Most participants were between the ages of 31-45 years old ($n = 74, 36.6\%$). The second highest category was age 18-30 ($n = 69, 34.2\%$). The lowest categories were ages 46-60 ($n = 32, 15.8\%$) and 60 and older ($n = 27, 13.4\%$).

A vast majority of individuals ($n = 158, 78\%$) identified as White. In descending order of endorsed frequency, participants endorsed: Latinx ($n = 15, 7\%$), Asian ($n = 12, 5.9\%$), Black ($n = 11, 5.4\%$) and other ($n=6, 3\%$). A large majority of participants ($n = 80, 39.6\%$) identified as married. In descending order, the following categories were endorsed: single ($n = 72, 35.6\%$), in a serious relationship ($n = 50, 24.8\%$).

The majority of participants identified as straight ($n = 159, 78.7\%$). Bisexual/other was the next most endorsed category ($n = 33, 16.3\%$) and gay was the lowest ($n = 10, 5\%$). The majority of participants identified as Christian ($n = 72, 35.6\%$). In descending order the following religious/spiritual affiliations were endorsed: “nothing in particular” ($n = 39, 19.3\%$), agnostic ($n = 38, 18.8\%$), atheist ($n = 28, 7.4\%$), Buddhist ($n = 15, 7.4\%$), Jewish ($n = 8, 4\%$) and Hindu ($n = 2, 1\%$). An email was received from a participant indicating that they were unsure how to list their Wiccan beliefs as they did not believe that their spiritual/religious beliefs were accurately represented in any of the response choices.

Most participants ($n = 59$, 29.2%) reported that their income last year was between \$50,001 and \$100,000. The second most frequent category ($n = 45$, 22.3%) reported income of \$25,001 – \$50,000. The third most frequently endorsed category was less than \$10,000 a year ($n = 41$, 20.3%). The fourth most endorsed category was between \$100,001 and \$150,000 ($n = 26$, 12.9%). Fewer indicated that their income was between \$10,000 and \$25,000 a year ($n = 21$, 10.4%). The lowest endorsed category was income more than \$150,000 a year ($n = 10$, 5%). Political views seemed to be skewed toward liberal views. Starting with the most frequently endorsed category and working down, participants endorsed the “liberal” category the highest ($n = 76$, 37.6%), the “very liberal” category was next ($n = 66$, 32.7%), “moderate” ($n = 50$, 24.8%), “conservative” ($n = 9$, 4.5%), and “very conservative” ($n = 1$, .5%). There were approximately 14 times more individuals who identified along the liberal spectrum than conservative spectrum. Overall, this sample appears to be skewed toward White, females under 45 who lean politically liberal.

Measures

In addition to the VEW, twelve additional measures were given to participants to measure different dimensions of reliability and validity. These measures include:

- (a) The Social Desirability Scale (Stober, 2001)
- (b) The Brief Locus of Control Scale (Lumpkin, 1985)
- (c) The Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008)
- (d) The Spiritual Meaning Scale (Mascaro, Rosen, & Morey, 2003)
- (e) The Patient Health Questionnaire (Kroenke, Spitzer, & Williams, 2001)
- (f) The Generalized Anxiety Disorder (Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, & Lowe, 2006)
- (g) The New Ecological Paradigm Revised Version (Dunlap et al., 2000)

- (h) The Purpose in Life Test Crumbaugh and Maholick, 1969)
- (i) The Social Well-Being Scale (Keys, 1998)
- (j) Brief Measure of the Big Five Personality (Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann, 2003)
- (k) The Self-Compassion Scale Short Form (Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011)
- (l) Seeking of Noetic Goals Test (Crumbaugh, 1977)

The Social Desirability Scale Seventeen (SDS-17)

The Social Desirability Scale Seventeen (Stober, 2001) is a 17-item binary choice (true/false) measure assessing endorsement of socially desirable (yet highly unlikely) thoughts and behaviors. Higher scores indicate increased socially desirable response patterns. The SDS-17 has evidence for validity and reliability with a diverse population. In a study assessing reliability and validity (Stober, 2001) on a sample of 101 undergrads, the SDS-17 demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach alpha=.72) and a high test-retest correlation across four weeks ($r = .82$). A moderately high correlation ($r = .74$) with the Marlowe Crown Scale offered evidence for convergent validity. The authors note that it was somewhat less reliable with older individuals. With the 202 participants who completed this measure, internal consistency for the SDS was very high (Cronbach's alpha = .82).

Brief Locus of Control Scale

The Brief Locus of Control Scale is a short-form version of Rotter's (1966) classic scale measuring *locus of control*. The construct of locus of control relates to how strongly individuals feel that they have control over situations and experiences in their lives. It is composed of six items on a five-point Likert-type scale with qualitative anchors ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The Brief Locus of Control Scale purports to measure the two theorized components of locus of control: internal control (e.g., "When I make plans, I am almost certain

that I can make them work.”) and chance (e.g., “Many of the unhappy things in people’s lives are partly due to bad luck”) (Lumpkin, 1985). Chance items are reverse scored so that higher scores indicate higher levels of perceived internal locus of control and lower levels of chance as a guiding force in individual’s lives.

In his validation study, Lumpkin (1985) obtained a sample of 3,009 individuals from all across the United States via mail response forms. No demographic information other than age and gender is provided with Lumpkin indicating a disproportionate number of older individuals 65 and older ($n = 1,482$, 49%). He reports good internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .68$) which compares similarly to Rotter’s original work. He reports that the Brief Locus of Control Scale was significantly correlated to several constructs similar to locus of control including life satisfaction and perceived risk. With the 202 participants who completed this measure, internal consistency for the Brief Locus of Control Scale was adequate (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .63$).

Authenticity Scale

Authenticity was measured using The Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008). The authenticity scale is based on the tripartite theory of authenticity defined by Berratt-Lennard (1998) which involve behavior, symbolized awareness, and primary experience. The Authenticity scale is 12 item scale to measure authenticity with three subscales (corresponding to the tripartite model) composed of 4 items each. These subscales include *Authentic Living* (e.g., “I think it is better to be yourself than to be popular”), *Accepting External Influence* (e.g., “I usually do what others tell me to do”), and *Self-Alienation* (e.g., “I feel as if I don’t know myself very well”). Self alienation is defined as the disparity between conscious awareness and actual experience. The authors define congruence between experience and behavior. They define the extent to which someone believes their behavior has to conform to the will of others. The authors

define authenticity as how in touch with one's true self one is. It is rated on a seven point Likert-type scale with qualitative anchors ranging from "this does not describe me at all" to "this described me very well". Four is a neutral midpoint. Higher scores on each subscale represent higher endorsement of authentic living, accepting external influence, and self-alienation. With *accepting external influence* and *self-alienation* items reverse scored, a total-scale mean can be obtained indicating score for total-scale authenticity.

The Authenticity scale subscales were found to have high reliability coefficients ranging from .72 to .84 with a diverse sample of 200 participants. In their initial validation study, Wood et al. (2008) found their scale to correlate highly with theoretically similar measures including measures of honesty, self-esteem, and life satisfaction.

With the 202 participants who completed this measure, internal consistency for the Authenticity subscales were mostly high. Total scale was moderate (Cronbach's alpha = .584). The Accepting External Influence subscale was very high (Cronbach's alpha = .81). Authentic Living was high (Cronbach's alpha = .745). Self Alienation was very high (Cronbach's alpha = .87).

The Spiritual Meaning Scale

The Spiritual Meaning Scale (SMS) (Mascaro, Rosen, & Morey, 2003) is a 14 item Likert-type scale measuring spiritual meaning. The authors define spiritual meaning as "the extent to which an individual believes that life or some force of which life is a function has a purpose, will, or way in which individuals participate" (Mascaro, Rosen, & Morey, 2003, p. 1). The authors indicate that the operationalization of their construct was in part Frankl and Nietzsche's existential supposition that having a *why* in life allows us to live with almost any *how*. The measure is rated on a 5 point scale where individuals are asked to rate their level of

agreement on a range from “I totally disagree” to “I totally agree”. Higher scores on each item and the scale total represent more endorsed spiritual meaning in the participant’s life.

In their initial validation study, Mascaro, Rosen, & Morey (2003) indicate that their scale produced an excellent reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s alpha=.89) with a sample of 465 undergraduate students. The Spiritual Meaning scale was significantly correlated with scales it was theoretically hypothesized to correlate with including the Herth Hope Scale ($r = .62, p > .001$), and the Snyder Hope Scale ($r = .31, p > .01$). With the 202 participants who completed this measure, internal consistency for the SMS was very high (Cronbach’s alpha = .92).

The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9)

The PHQ-9 (Kroenke, Spitzer, & Williams, 2001) is a 9-item index used to assess depression. It is primarily used in the primary care population and is often given by integrated mental health professionals. Depression was operationalized by the authors as the 9 symptoms of major depressive disorder in the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). The authors created 9 items corresponding to each of these 9 symptoms (e.g. anhedonia “Loss of interest or pleasure in doing things”; depressed mood “Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless”; sleep disturbances “trouble falling asleep or staying asleep”, etc.). Items are endorsed on one of four frequency anchors from “Not at all” to “Nearly everyday”.

The PHQ-9 has demonstrated excellent reliability in a number of validation studies. Kroenke, Spitzer, & Williams (2001) gave the PHQ-9 to 6,000 primary care patients and reported a Cronbach’s alpha of .89. The researchers gave the same population the PHQ-9 in an inpatient setting and again over the telephone after forty-eight hours. The test-retest correlation between the scores was .84. The PHQ-9 has demonstrated evidence for construct validity as it is significantly correlated with self-reported disability days, clinic visits, and difficulty patients

attribute to their symptoms, and various other measures of depression (Kroenke, Spitzer, & Williams, 2001). With the 202 participants who completed this measure, internal consistency for the PHQ-9 was very high (Cronbach's alpha = .89).

The Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7

The Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) scale is a 7 item index used to assess generalized anxiety. The GAD-7 was developed by a multidisciplinary team of researchers. Generalized anxiety was operationalized by the authors as the 7 symptoms of generalized anxiety in the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). The authors created 7 items corresponding to each of these 7 symptoms (e.g. "Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge" ; "Not being able to stop or control worrying" ; "Worrying too much about different things" ; etc.). Items are endorsed on one of four frequency anchors from "Not at all" to "Nearly everyday". Higher scores indicate more symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder.

The GAD-7 has produced evidence for reliability and validity. In their index construction, Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, and Lowe (2006) gave the GAD-7 to 2,740 adults. Analysis of covariance was computed between the GAD and SF-20 functional status scales, self-reported sick days, and physician visits controlling for demographic variables. Factor analysis was run to ensure the anxiety was being measured distinctly from depression. Results indicated anxiety and depression as highly correlated but distinct constructs with independent effects on functional impairment and disability. Increasing score on the GAD-7 are strongly associated with multiple areas of functional impairment. With the 202 participants who completed this measure, internal consistency for the GAD-7 was very high (Cronbach's alpha = .90).

The New Ecological Paradigm (Revised Version 2000)

The New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) Revised Scale is a revised scale of the original Dunlap (1978) NEP created to explore participants beliefs about the environment. In 2000 Dunlap et al., (2000) revised their original scale to make it more psychometrically sound and avoid sexist terminology (e.g. mankind was changed to humankind). The NEP Revised is a 15-item scale used to assess facets of beliefs about the environment and humans' relationship to it. It is composed of 3 subscales *Limits to Growth* (e.g. "We are approaching the limit of the number of people the earth can support"), *Antianthropocentrism* (e.g. "Humans are meant to rule over the rest of nature"), *The Fragility of Nature's Balance* (e.g. "The balance of nature is delicate and easily upset") and *The Possibility of an Eco-Crisis* (e.g. "If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe"). Each item making up each subscale is endorsed on a Likert-type scale with 5 frequency anchors ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". For this project, only one subscale, the *Antianthropocentrism* subscale was used. The *Antianthropocentrism* subscale assesses "...the belief that nature exist primarily for human use and has no inherent value of its own" (Dunlap et al., 2000, p. 431).

The authors of the initial validation study indicate that the NEP total scale has good internal consistency with a sample of 1300 residents of the state of Washington (Cronbach's alpha = .83). Scores on the NEP Revised scale correlated significantly with measures of perceived seriousness of world ecological problems ($r = .61$) and pro-environmental policies ($r = .57$) (Dunlap et al., 2000). With the 202 participants who completed this measure, internal consistency for the NEP Antianthropocentrism subscale was adequate (Cronbach's alpha = .56).

The Purpose in Life Test Short Form

The Purpose in Life (PIL) test (Crumbaugh and Maholick, 1969) helps to elucidate not only on a client's current self-evaluation of his or her meaning in life, but how this construct

relates to well-being (Schulenberg, Schnetzer, & Buchanan, 2011). The PIL is a measure assessing attitudes towards meaning and purpose in life based on Viktor Frankl's "existential vacuum" which is conceptualized as a state of emptiness and boredom. It is a 4 item measure in which a higher score suggests that the individual has more purpose in life. The four items are each ranked on a 7-point scale, but have different qualitative anchors. Item 1 is: "In life I have:" With 7 frequency options starting with "no aims or goals" and ending with "clear aims and goals". The PIL has been cited as one of the trailblazing measures assessing meaning in a psychometrically sound way (Schulenberg, Schnetzer, & Buchanan, 2011). The PIL Short form includes only four questions from the long form version but retained identical coefficient alpha (.86) when administered to 298 undergraduates in the United States.

The PIL-SF was significantly correlated with the PIL long form ($r = .82$) when embedded with the PIL-LF. When given independently, it was again significantly correlated ($r = .75$). The PIL-SF has been shown to produce data that provides evidence for its reliability and validity. It was correlated in theoretically predicted ways including being correlated with the Life Purpose Questionnaire ($r = .58$) and the Meaning in Life Questionnaire ($r = .64$). With the 202 participants who completed this measure, internal consistency for the PIL-SF was high (Cronbach's alpha = .82).

Social Well-Being Scale (Social Integration Subscale)

The Social Well-Being Scale (Keys, 1998) assesses well-being from an interpersonal perspective. The author notes that despite the push from social psychology and sociology, wellbeing in psychology is traditionally assessed through a lens of individualism – with wellbeing often operationalized as collection of positive emotions. This lack of negative emotions and a presence of positive ones denotes "well-being" in traditional psychological

literature. The social wellbeing scale attempts to measure the wellbeing of a person from an interpersonal perspective.

The Social Well-Being Scale measures five dimensions (subscales) of social wellbeing: social integration, social contribution, social coherence, social actualization, and social acceptance. The scale is composed of 10 items which are anchored on a 1-7 Likert-type scale from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”. In the initial validation study with 3,032 participants, the SWB social integration subscale produced good internal reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.73$). The Social-Well-Being total scale correlates negatively with general dysphoria and positively with global well-being measures.

For the purpose of this study, the social integration subscale only will be used. This subscale measures the degree to which a person feels connected with and supported by their community. The authors state, “Social integration is the evaluation of the quality of one’s relationship to society and community. Healthy individuals feel that they are a part of society. Integration is therefore the extent to which people feel they have something in common with others who constitute their social reality (e.g., their neighborhood), as well as the degree to which they feel that they belong to their communities and society. Social integration draws on conceptions of social cohesion (Durkheim), cultural estrangement and social isolation (Seeman), and class consciousness (Marx)” (Keyes, 1998). With the 202 participants who completed this measure, internal consistency for the SWB Social Integration subscale was very high (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .954$).

A Very Brief Measure of the Big Five Personality Traits

The Very Brief Measure of the Big Five Personality traits (Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann, 2003) evaluates personality based on the “big five” traits (extroversion, agreeableness,

conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience). The Very Brief Measure of the Big Five instrument is a 10-item measure with five subscales (2 items each) corresponding to the five traits. Each item is anchored on a 7 point Likert-type scale with qualitative anchors from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. In a sample of 1704 undergraduate students, The Brief measure produced the following internal consistency results (Cronbach’s alpha): Extraversion = .68, Agreeableness = .40, Conscientiousness = .50, Emotional Stability = .73, and Openness to Experience = .45. The authors note that the small number of items (2 items per subscale) resulted in lower internal consistency scores. Convergent validity of the Brief Measure was assessed through correlation with the larger 44-item Big Five Inventory (BFI) with the average correlation being extremely high (mean $r = .77$). Specific subscale correlations with the BFI were: Extraversion ($r = .87$), Agreeableness ($r = .70$), Conscientiousness ($r = .75$), Emotional Stability ($r = .81$), and Openness to Experience ($r = .65$).

With the 202 participants who completed this measure, internal consistency for each of the subscales ranged from low to high. The Extroversion subscale internal reliability was high (Cronbach’s alpha = .844). The Agreeableness subscale had lower internal reliability (Cronbach’s alpha = .372). Conscientiousness was adequate (Cronbach’s alpha = .549). Emotional Stability was high (Cronbach’s alpha = .749). Openness to Experience was adequate (Cronbach’s alpha = .494).

The Self-Compassion Scale Short Form

The Self-Compassion Scale Short Form (Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011) is a 12-item scale with 6 subscales (2 items each). Participants are asked to endorse how often they behave in a stated manner. The measure is anchored on a 5 point scale from “Almost never” to “Almost Always”. The authors define self-compassion as “The ability to hold one’s feelings of

suffering with a sense of warmth, connection and concern” (Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011, p. 250). The Self Compassion Scale measures 6 components of self-compassion which make up the 6 subscales: *Self Kindness* (e.g. “I try to be understanding and patient toward those aspects of my personality I don’t like”), *Self-Judgement* (e.g. “I’m disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies”), *Common Humanity* (e.g. “I try to see my failings as part of the human condition”), *Isolation* (e.g. “When I’m feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am”), *Mindfulness* (e.g. “When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation”), and *Over-Identification* (e.g. When I’m feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that’s wrong”).

In their validation study, the authors note that each of the subscales produced a range from moderate to high internal consistency with a sample of 271 Dutch undergraduate students. These internal consistency scores include: Self Kindness (Cronbach alpha = .55), Self-Judgement Cronbach alpha = .81), Common Humanity (Cronbach alpha = .60), Isolation (Cronbach alpha = .77), Mindfulness (Cronbach alpha = .64), and Over-Identification (Cronbach alpha = .87). Validity of the Self-Compassion Short form was assessed through correlation with the Self-Compassion Scale (long form). The long form is a 26 item measure with the same subscales as the short form. The short form produced a near perfect correlation with the long form ($r = .98$). Subscale correlations between the short form and long form were: Self Kindness ($r = .89$), Self-Judgement ($r = .90$), Common Humanity ($r = .91$), Isolation ($r = .93$), Mindfulness ($r = .89$), and Over-Identification ($r = .89$).

With the 202 participants who completed this measure, internal consistency for the total SCS was high (Cronbach’s alpha = .888). Internal consistency for each of the subscales ranged from adequate to high. The Self-Kindness subscale internal reliability was adequate (Cronbach’s

alpha = .682). The Self-Judgement subscale internal reliability was high (Cronbach's alpha = .805). The Common Humanity subscale internal reliability was adequate (Cronbach's alpha = .609). Isolation subscale internal reliability was adequate (Cronbach's alpha = .621). Mindfulness subscale internal reliability was adequate (Cronbach's alpha = .585). Over Identification subscale internal reliability was high (Cronbach's alpha = .805).

Seeking of Noetic Goals (SONG)

The Seeking of Noetic Goals (SONG) (Crumbaugh, 1977) explores attitudes towards motivation to search for meaning (Schulenberg, Schnetzer, & Buchanan, 2011). The SONG is a 20-item measure that assess the degree to which an individual has a drive toward seeking meaning in their life. Items are measured on a 5 point scale from "Never" to "Constantly". A higher score indicates more desire toward seeking meaning.

Schulenberg, Baczwaski, and Buchanan (2014) reviewed several studies done where reliability and validity of the SONG was assessed. They noted that it has demonstrated reliability coefficients averaging about .80 in the majority of studies it was assessed. Most research suggests that the SONG correlates with other meaning-focused instruments negatively and with instruments assessing psychological distress. The authors suggest, "These findings are often interpreted to mean that meaning's presence is associated with lower motivation to discover additional meaning, and that psychological distress is related to a greater perceived need to discover meaning." (Schulenberg, Baczwaski, & Buchanan, 2014, p. 698). The SONG produced significant positive correlations to the Meaning in Life Questionnaire ($r = .45$) and Satisfaction in Life Questionnaire ($r = -.36$) in a study of 908 individuals. With the 202 participants who completed this measure, internal consistency for the total SONG was high (Cronbach's alpha = .851).

Procedure

In this measure construction project, the Values of Existential Worlds (VEW) was created using the iterative process of measure development as outlined by Devillis (2017). An initial pool of 100 items was created based on a review of theoretical literature. See Appendix B for a list of the initial items. The items were then given to a panel of expert reviewers to assess content validity. The expert review process was informed by the recommendations of Grant and Davis (1997) in their *Selection and use of content experts for instrument development*. The authors suggest that expert reviewers be picked for their specific knowledge and ability to provide feedback. The authors also suggest that the process be standardized and ask the reviewers to quantify their assessment of the items' validity to the given scale/subscale. To accomplish this, I created a standardized expert review survey on Qualtrics (See Appendix B). The VEW measure was introduced and each scale was explained in detail. The reviewers were given a chance to endorse their belief in each item's fidelity to the given construct (umwelt, mitwelt, eigentwelt, uberwelt). They were asked to endorse each item's fidelity on a 5-point Likert-type scale from "Very Low" to "Very High". Additionally, per the recommendations of Grant and Davis (1997) the reviewers were asked to provide qualitative data related to each scale.

This panel of expert reviewers consisted of a theorist and a practitioner. The theorist is an expert in the field of existential psychology and coauthor of several works in existential psychology and the practitioner is a licensed clinical psychologist who practices from an ACT perspective. Both indicated that values work was important in their work. See appendix B for the full text and all items given to expert reviewers. See appendix C for the full list of items in the final version of the VEW.

The data from the expert review panel was analyzed. Items were given a numerical value from 1 “Very Low” to 5 “Very High”. Mean item score was 3.5. Standard Deviation = .707. As most items were rated within the “high” to “very high” a stringent item retention standard was set in order to eliminate enough items to reduce the scale by around 40%. I initially hoped to optimize the number of items to around 50, but this was not possible given the restricted range of expert review scores. No item that was endorsed any lower than a 4 or “High” by either of the expert reviewers was kept. This reduced the item pool to 63 items.

I then created the final survey comprised of 11 demographic questions, the 63-item VEW, and the additional 12 measures used to assess the validity of the VEW:) The Social Desirability Scale (Stober, 2001), The Brief Locus of Control Scale (Lumpkin, 1985), The Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008), The Spiritual Meaning Scale (Mascaro, Rosen, & Morey, 2003), The Patient Health Questionnaire (Kroenke, Spitzer, & Williams, 2001), The Generalized Anxiety Disorder (Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, & Lowe, 2006), The New Ecological Paradigm Revised Version (Dunlap et al., 2000), The Purpose in Life Test Crumbaugh and Maholick, 1969), The Social Well-Being Scale (Keys, 1998), Brief Measure of the Big Five Personality (Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann, 2003), The Self-Compassion Scale Short Form (Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011), and the Seeking of Noetic Goals Test (Crumbaugh, 1977). In addition to demographics and selected measures, two validity items (instructed items) were used to detect low-quality responses. Per the best practice recommendations related to data screening (DeSimone & DeSimone, 2015) two of these instructed validity items were used at two points (approximately 25% through the survey and approximately 75% through.)

The survey was sent out over the University of North Dakota Counseling Psychology listserv, the American Psychological Association Division 17: Society for Counseling Society

listserv and the American Psychological Association Division 32: Society for Humanistic Psychology listserv to recruit participants. Additionally, participants were recruited via Reddit social media (Sample Size subreddit).

In total, 264 participants engaged with the survey. Of these 264 original participants, 61 completed less than 74% of the survey and were removed from the sample. Of the remaining responses, 198 participants completed the survey in its entirety, with 5 participants who completed between 74% and 98% of the survey. These 5 were retained given that they completed the majority of the survey and their responses appeared valid. Of the remaining 203 participants, 1 participant failed both validity checks and was removed from the sample. A final sample of 202 participants was retained for data analysis which meets the best-practice guidelines of Russell (2002).

Reliability of items and constructs was assessed via internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha). Construct validity was assessed through a variety of ways including assessing convergent validity - the constructs correlating positively with measures that should theoretically be tapping similar constructs (e.g. mitwelt construct correlating with The Social Well-Being Scale). Discriminant validity was measured by assessing degree of correlation between measures that should theoretically not correlate (e.g. social desirability and eigenwelt construct). Exploratory factor analysis was run on the data from the sample. Correlations between the existing measures with the VEW subscales were computed and reviewed. The data was then synthesized and compared against hypotheses.

Additional analysis including t tests and ANOVAS were completed to explore if age, gender, or other demographic variables play a role in endorsement of specific VEW scales (or if they may be confounding variables in some way previously not considered). The independent

variables will be demographic variables. The dependent variables will be the 4 existential world constructs. See Chapter 4 (Analysis) for details. Finally, data was interpreted using theory. See Chapter 5 (Discussion) for details.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

“...there is a knife moving here. A very deadly one; an intellectual scalpel so swift and so sharp you sometimes don’t see it moving. You get the illusion that all those parts [of the motorcycle] are just there and are being named as they exist. But they can be named quite differently and organized quite differently depending on how the knife moves.”

- Robert Pirsig

Preliminary Analysis

Statistical analysis including independent sample t tests, ANOVAs, Pearson correlations, and multiple regressions were run on the original 63-items to determine if there were any differences in mean scores of each of the VEW scales for any of the participant demographic variables. ANOVA data indicated that several individual demographic variables did appear to affect how respondents endorsed items on VEW scales. Several demographic variables appeared to have no impact. Ethnicity, relationship status, sexual orientation, income level, and number of physical health concerns appeared to have no impact on scale scores. There is evidence for several demographic variables impacting scale scores. These include: Age, gender, religious beliefs, political beliefs, frequency of engaging in spiritual practices, and frequency of engaging in mental health practices.

Reliability analysis was run on each of the VEW scales and all of the other scales included in the study. Factor analysis was run on the VEW to determine if items loaded onto theoretically predicted factors (each world). A short-form version of the VEW (20-items) was created based on psychometric refinement including the results of factor analysis, reliability analysis, and an attempt to include all dimensions of the theory. The creation of this 20-item measure is explained in the factor analysis section.

Demographic Differences

ANOVA and multiple regression results for the short form version were similar to the 63 items, while factor structure became much clearer. Multiple regression results from the short form which included all demographic variables suggested that all of the demographic variables accounted for about 42% of the scores on the Uberwelt scale. The Uberwelt scale was the only scale in which the demographic variables appeared to have any predictive power. Multiple regression results were similar for both the full-scale and the short form version of the VEW. Only the Uberwelt scale scores were predicted by demographic variables for both full-scale and short form versions. Correlational data was also similar on both the full-scale and short form versions and offered preliminary evidence for construct validity.

Ethnicity

For the full-scale VEW, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of all VEW scales and ethnicity collapsed into 5 categories: Black ($n = 11$), White ($n = 158$), Latinx ($n = 14$), Asian ($n = 11$) and Other ($n = 6$). No significant between-subjects differences were found between any of the ethnicity categories. Results were the same for the short-form (20-item measure).

Relationship Status

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of all VEW scale items (full 63 items) and relationship status collapsed into 3 categories: Single ($n = 72$), Serious Relationship ($n = 48$), and Married ($n = 80$). No significant between-subjects differences were found on any of the ethnicity variables. Results were the same for the short form.

Sexual Orientation

For the full 63-item measure, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of all VEW scales and sexual orientation collapsed into 3 categories: Straight ($n = 156$), Gay ($n = 19$), and Bisexual/Other ($n = 33$). No significant between-subjects differences were found between any of the sexual orientation categories. The results were the same for the short form.

Income

For the full scale measure, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of all VEW scales and income levels collapsed into 6 categories: Less than \$10,000 ($n = 41$), \$10,000-\$25,000 ($n = 20$), \$25,001-\$50,000 ($n = 45$), \$50,001 – 100,000 ($n = 59$), and \$100,001 -\$150,000 ($n = 26$), and \$150+ ($n = 9$). No significant between-subjects differences were found between any of the income categories. Income categories were collapsed into binary categories (lowest 3 and the highest 3 categories) and an independent samples t test was run; however, this too indicated no significant differences. The results were the same for the short-form.

Number of Physical Health Concerns

For the full scale measure, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of all VEW scales and number of physical health collapsed into 5 frequency categories: 0 ($n = 71$), 1 ($n = 46$), 2 ($n = 56$), 3 ($n = 13$), and 4+ ($n = 13$). There were no significant between group differences indicated. Results were the same for the short form.

Age

For the full-scale VEW, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of all VEW scales and age collapsed into 4 categories: 18-30 years-old ($n = 68$), 31-45 years-old ($n = 74$), 46-60 years-old ($n = 31$) and 60+ ($n = 27$). There was a significant difference

effect of umwelt scores on age for the four categories [$F(3,196) = 7.08, p < .01$]. Older individuals endorsed higher umwelt scale scores with each age group endorsing higher umwelt scores than the previous age group: 18-30 ($M = 5.01, SD = .88$), 31-45 ($M = 5.2, SD = .77$), 46-60 ($M = 5.5, SD = .66$), and 60+ ($M = 5.7, SD = .57$). Post hoc Turkey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the 18-30 year old category ($M = 5.01$) was significantly different than 46-60 ($M = 5.5$) and 60+ ($M = 5.7$) categories. The 31-45 year-old category was significantly different than the 60+ category ($M = 5.7$).

There was a significant difference effect of uberwelt scores on age for the four categories [$F(3,196) = 3.94, p = .009$]. Like, umwelt scores, uberwelt scores appeared to increase with age: 18-30 ($M = 5.18, SD = .86$), 31-45 ($M = 5.38, SD = 1.15$), 46-60 ($M = 5.77, SD = .90$), and 60+ ($M = 5.77, SD = .71$). Post hoc Turkey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the 18-30 year-old category ($M = 5.18$) was significantly different than 46-60 ($M = 5.77$). Cohen's effect size value ($d = .67$) suggested a moderate practical significance. There was a significant difference between the 18-30 year-old category and the 60+ category ($M = 5.77$). The effect size value ($d = .67$) also indicated a moderate practical significance.

Results were very similar for the 20-item version of the umwelt scale and age. There was a significant difference effect of umwelt scores on age for the four age categories [$F(3,196) = 6.57, p < .01$]. Older individuals endorsed higher umwelt scale scores with each age group endorsing higher umwelt scores than the previous age group: 18-30 ($M = 4.69, SD = 1.31$), 31-45 ($M = 5.13, SD = 1$), 46-60 ($M = 5.7, SD = .9$), and 60+ ($M = 5.7, SD = .7$). Post hoc Turkey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the 18-30 year old category ($M = 4.69$) was significantly different ($p = .02$) than 46-60 ($M = 5.7$) categories. Cohen's effect size value ($d = .67$) suggested a moderate practical significance.

For the 20-item version of the uberwelt scale and age were similar. There was a significant difference effect of uberwelt scores on age for the four categories [$F(3,196) = 6.95, p < .01$]. Like, umwelt scores, uberwelt scores appeared to increase with age: 18-30 ($M = 4.74, SD = 1.94$), 31-45 ($M = 5.37, SD = 1.37$), 46-60 ($M = 5.77, SD = 1$), and 60+ ($M = 5.26, SD = 1.28$). Post hoc Turkey HSD test indicated that the mean score for 18-30 year-old category ($M = 4.74$) was significantly different ($p < .01$) than the 31-45 category ($M = 5.37$). Cohen's effect size value ($d = .38$) suggested a small practical significance. The 18-30 year-old category was also significantly different ($p < .01$) than 46-60 ($M = 5.77$) category. Cohen's effect size value ($d = .67$) suggested a moderate practical significance. There was also a significant difference ($p < .01$) between the 18-30 category and the 60+ category ($M = 5.26$). Cohen's effect size value ($d = .32$) suggested a small to moderate practical significance.

Gender

For the full-scale VEW, there were not enough nonbinary participants ($n = 2$) in the sample to run ANOVA analysis and so gender was treated as a binary variable. An independent samples t test was conducted to compare the effect of all VEW scales and gender collapsed into a binary category of men ($n = 74$) and women ($n = 124$). There was a small but significant effect of umwelt scale scores between a binary gender split. Women ($M = 5.33, SD = .73$) valued their existence in the physical dimension slightly more than men ($M = 5.23, SD = .93$). This was significant $t(196) = 4.38, p = .038$. Cohen's effect size value ($d = .12$) suggested a small practical significance.

Women in the sample also reported that they valued their existence in the social dimension ($M = 5.47, SD = .63$) slightly more than men ($M = 5.42, SD = .85$). This was significant $t(196) = 4.31, p = .039$. Cohen's effect size value ($d = .07$) suggested a very small

practical significance. For the 20-item scale, there was no significant difference on any of the scales between a binary gender split.

Religious Beliefs

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of all VEW scales and religious beliefs collapsed into 7 categories: Christian ($n = 71$), Jewish ($n = 8$), Buddhist ($n = 14$), Hindu ($n = 1$), Atheist ($n = 28$), Agnostic ($n = 38$), and Nothing in Particular ($n = 39$). There was a significant difference effect of mitwelt scores on religious beliefs for the 7 categories [$F(6,193) = 2.08, p = .05$]. Post hoc Turkey HSD test could not be completed; however, given the small number of participants in several religious categories (e.g. Jewish, Buddhist, and Hindu).

Frequency of Spiritual Practice

For the full 63 item measure, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of all VEW scales and frequency of engaging in spiritual practice collapsed into 5 frequency categories: Never ($n = 55$), Once a Year ($n = 37$), Once a Month ($n = 22$), Once a Week ($n = 45$), and Daily ($n = 40$). There was a significant difference between uberwelt scores depending on the frequency of engaging in spiritual practice for the 5 categories [$F(4,194) = 7.16, p < .01$]. Frequency of engaging in a spiritual practice was linearly related to uberwelt scores with the higher the frequency of spiritual practice, the higher the uberwelt score. Post hoc Turkey HSD test indicated significant differences between Never ($M = 4.97, SD = 1.06$) and Once a Week ($M = 5.7, SD = .93$) and between Never ($M = 4.97, SD = 1.06$) and Daily ($M = 5.96, SD = .81$), and Once a Year ($M = 5.18, SD = .88$) and Daily ($M = 5.96, SD = .81$).

For the 20-item scale, there were significant differences found between participants mitwelt and uberwelt scores based on frequency of engaging in spiritual practice. There was a

significant difference between mitwelt scores depending on the frequency of engaging in spiritual practice for the 5 categories [$F(4,194) = 2.4, p = .04$]. However, Post-hoc Turkey HSD test did not indicate any statistically significant results.

For the 20-item scale, there was a significant difference between uberwelt scores depending on the frequency of engaging in spiritual practice for the 5 categories [$F(4,194) = 26.25, p < .01$]. Frequency of engaging in a spiritual practice was related to uberwelt scores with the higher the frequency of spiritual practice, the higher the uberwelt score. Post hoc Turkey HSD test indicated a significant difference ($p < .01$) between Never ($M = 4.3, SD = 1.24$) and Once a Week ($M = 5.86, SD = .97$). There was a significant difference ($p < .01$) between Never ($M = 4.3$) and Daily ($M = 6.19, SD = .81$). There was also a significant difference ($p < .01$) between Never and once a month ($M = 5.34$).

Political Affiliation

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of all VEW scales and political affiliation collapsed into 5 categories: Very Conservative ($n = 1$), Conservative ($n = 9$), Moderate ($n = 50$), Liberal ($n = 74$) and Very Liberal ($n = 66$). There was a significant difference effect of umwelt scores on political beliefs for the 5 categories [$F(4,195) = 4.37, p = .002$], mitwelt scores [$F(4,195) = 4.69, p = .001$], and uberwelt scores [$F(4,195) = 4.90, p = .001$]. Post hoc Turkey HSD test could not be completed given the small number of participants in the conservative categories; however, umwelt, mitwelt, and uberwelt mean scores increased as a function of political liberalism. The following is mean data for the umwelt dimension: Very conservative ($M = 2.9$), Conservative ($M = 4.8, SD = .58$), Moderate ($M = 5.1, SD = .79$), Liberal ($M = 5.32, SD = .82$), Very Liberal ($M = 5.46, SD = .74$).

For the 20-item scale, significant difference was found between umwelt scores based on political affiliation [$F(4,195) = 3.95, p = .004$], and eigenwelt scores based on political affiliation [$F(4,195) = 2.94, p = .02$]. Like the 63-item scale, scores on both scales appeared to go up as a function of self-professed political liberalism.

Frequency of Engaging in Mental Health Activities

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of all VEW scales and frequency of engaging in mental health activities as collapsed into 5 frequency categories: Never ($n = 29$), Once a Year ($n = 5$), Once a Month ($n = 30$), Once a Week ($n = 66$), and Daily ($n = 69$). Significant differences were found on All VEW scales for each the 5 frequency categories: umwelt [$F(4,194) = 5.92, p < .01$], mitwelt [$F(4,194) = 3.90, p = .005$], eigenwelt [$F(4,194) = 10.70, p < .01$], and uberwelt [$F(4,194) = 9.78, p < .01$].

Post hoc Turkey HSD test indicated significant differences in means for the umwelt scale between the Never ($M = 4.77, SD = .95$) and Once a Week ($M = 5.33, SD = .76$) and Never ($M = 4.77, SD = .95$) and Daily ($M = 5.54, SD = .74$). Post hoc Turkey HSD test indicated significant differences in means for the mitwelt scale between the Never ($M = 5.01, SD = .93$) and Once a Week ($M = 5.58, SD = .66$) and Never ($M = 5.01, SD = .93$) and Daily ($M = 5.54, SD = .63$) categories.

Post hoc Turkey HSD test indicated significant differences in means for the eigenwelt scale between the Never ($M = 4.82, SD = 1.03$) and Once a Week ($M = 5.84, SD = .63$), Never ($M = 4.82, SD = 1.03$) and Once a Month ($M = 5.79, SD = .66$) and Never ($M = 4.82, SD = 1.03$) and Daily ($M = 5.77, SD = .77$) categories.

Post hoc Turkey HSD test indicated significant differences in means for the umwelt scale between the Never ($M = 4.99, SD = 1.1$) and Once a Month ($M = 5.40, SD = .84$); Never ($M =$

4.99, $SD = 1.1$) and Once a Week ($M = 5.68$, $SD = .84$); and Never ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 1.1$) and Daily ($M = 5.60$, $SD = .84$).

Results were similar with the 20-item scale. The value that individuals tended to endorse each world (except mitwelt) rose with the frequency with which individuals engaged in mental health services. Statistically significant results included uberwelt [$F(4,194) = 4.6$, $p < .01$], eigenwelt [$F(4,194) = 7.45$, $p < .01$], and uberwelt [$F(4,194) = 9.88$, $p < .01$]. Means and Post hoc Turkey HSD results were similar to the 63 item scale.

Overall, data provided evidence that age, gender, religious beliefs, political beliefs, frequency of engaging in spiritual practices, and frequency of engaging in mental health practices were demographic variables that may impact the way VEW scale items were endorsed. The older the individual participant was, the more likely they were to endorse the physical world (umwelt) dimension as important to them. Additionally, older individuals were more likely than younger individuals to endorse the spiritual dimension (uberwelt) as important to them.

Using all 63 items, women tended to endorse valuing their physical and social dimensions more than men. The more someone claimed to engage in their personal spiritual practice, the more they tended to report valuing the spiritual dimension of their existence. Additionally, umwelt, mitwelt, and uberwelt mean scores increased as a function of political liberalism with individuals who endorsed more liberal political beliefs also reporting valuing each dimension (except for eigenwelt) more than their conservative counterparts. Scores on the umwelt, eigenwelt, and uberwelt scale also seemed to increase linearly related to how frequently someone engages in mental health services. See the discussion section for exploration of these findings and connection to theory.

Multiple Regression

Results from four multiple regressions for both the 63-item and 20-item measure indicated that demographic variables were predictive of scores only on the Uberwelt subscale. For the 20-item measure, it was found that demographic variables including: ethnicity (collapsed into non-White and White), sexual orientation, religious affiliation, income, health concerns, gender, relationship status, mental health practices, and spiritual practices explain a significant amount of the variance associated with the uberwelt scale ($F(21, 84) = 2.84, p < .01, R^2 = .42$).

Factor Structure

The VEW measure was created to be both a test to see if the four-worlds model could be psychometrically explored, and to produce a clinically useful measure. Factor analysis was the tool used to explore the items psychometrically and to assist in whittling items down to increase clinical utility, as the initial 63-item measure did not produce clear factor structure and shorter measures are more clinically useful (DeVellis, 2017). After psychometric testing using exploratory factor analysis, a shorter 20-item version (5 items per existential world) of the VEW with a clearer and more theoretically-sound factor structure was created from the initial pool of 63 items. I intent to demonstrate how I moved from these initial 63 items down to the short-form version in this section.

I hypothesized that the factor structure of the 63-item VEW would produce a clear four-factor solution consisting of items loading onto the theoretical constructs based on the four existential worlds (van Deurzen, 2008). To test this hypothesis, exploratory factor analysis using maximum likelihood extraction with oblimin rotation was run using SPSS version 26. See Table 6 for these initial factor analysis results. Results produced 13 factors with eigenvalues above 1. These thirteen factors accounted for a cumulative 72.3% of the variance in the scores. A Scree plot shows factors beginning to elbow around 2-4 factors. See Table 7 for scree plot.

Using the cutoff point of items loading onto factors above the value of .4 I began to see the outline of single factors for both the umwelt and mitwelt scales; however, for the eigenwelt and uberwelt scales factor structure was less clear with many items having several cross-loadings. In order to produce a measure with a factor structure based on theory, it was clear that a shorter version would need to be explored.

In order to produce this shorter version, I began the process of whittling down items to a shorter version using several criteria based on scale construction process as outlined by DeVellis (2017): a) items loading onto the same factor from the initial exploratory factor analysis b) strength of loading c) fewest cross loadings d) items that were most theoretically salient when taken together (to attempt to capture all dimensions of the scale) and e) items that did not significantly affect the high internal reliability of the scales.

Umwelt and Mitwelt scales were relatively simple as most items loaded onto a single factor for each scale (see Table 6). For the umwelt scale, 9 out of the 14 items loaded at .4 or higher on a single factor. For the mitwelt scale, 14 out of the 16 items loaded onto a single factor. I chose 5 items from each of these scales that loaded highest onto the respective factor while considering items that had the least number of cross-loadings. As reliability analysis was not significantly affected by the removal of any items, internal reliability was not impacted. For the umwelt scale, items 2,3,4,6, and 9 were chosen to represent the scale. For the mitwelt scale, items 9, 12, 13, 15, and 16 were chosen.

The eigenwelt scale was more difficult as there appeared to be between 2 and 3 factors represented in the initial exploratory factor analysis (see Table 6). Items were selected that had the fewest cross-loadings and captured the universe of construct. Several subsequent factor analysis were run on selected items with five items producing the clearest factor structure. These

items were: 1, 2, 5, 9 and 15. The umwelt scale was also more complicated as there appeared to be between 2 and 4 factors represented in the initial exploratory factor analysis. Using theory and additional factor analysis as a guide, items 10, 11, 12,13, and 16 were chosen. Internal reliability was not significantly impacted with the removal of any of the eigenwelt or uberwelt items.

I attempted exploratory factor analysis on these 20 items using maximum likelihood extraction and oblimin rotation (see Table 13). Results of this factor analysis produced a theoretically hypothesized four-factor solution which accounted for 65% of the variance in the scores. For the umwelt scale, items loaded onto a single factor at strengths ranging from .61 to .86. All items loaded onto this single factor higher than any other. For the mitwelt scale, items loaded highest onto a single factor at strengths ranging from .58 to .80. For the eigenwelt scale, items loaded highest onto a single factor at strengths ranging from .58 to .82. For the uberwelt scale, items loaded highest onto a single factor at strengths ranging from .56 to .95. Table 13 demonstrates clearly that this four-factor solution appears psychometrically sound and a 20-item measure is psychometrically superior to the initial 63 item total scale. A scree plot of the 20-item version (see Table 14) appears to elbow between 2-5 items. Reliability and validity measures were not significantly impacted by the removal of items as will be discussed further in the next section.

Reliability and Validity

Internal Reliability

For the 63-item measure, all VEW scales demonstrated good to excellent internal reliability. Each scale including umwelt (Cronbach's alpha = .89), mitwelt (Cronbach's alpha = .92), eigenwelt (Cronbach's alpha = .94), and Uberwelt (Cronbach's alpha = .94) produced alpha coefficients close to .9. Sources differ on how to interpret cutoffs for alpha coefficients. Some

researchers use the following cutoffs: $> .9$ – Excellent, $> .8$ – Good, $> .7$ – Acceptable, $> .6$ – Questionable, $> .5$ – Poor, and $< .5$ – Unacceptable (Helms et al., 2006). Though statisticians often agree that these cutoffs may be arbitrary, these are commonly used cutoffs. See Table 1 for internal reliability and descriptive statistics of VEW scales.

When exploring if removing specific items would impact reliability, it was discovered that there were no outliers for any of the scales. There were only a few items that, when dropped, increased reliability and none of these would raise alpha significantly.

The 20-item measure was tested for internal reliability with each scale producing good reliability. Like the 63-item scale, reliability was close to .9 for each scale: umwelt (Cronbach's alpha = .87), mitwelt (Cronbach's alpha = .81), eigenwelt (Cronbach's alpha = .84), and Uberwelt (Cronbach's alpha = .87). See Table 8 for internal reliability and descriptive statistics of the 20-item VEW.

Discriminant Validity

Correlation cutoff points and qualitative anchors as defined by DeVellis (2017) were used to explore discriminant and convergent validity: 0.00-0.19: very weak, 0.20-0.39: weak, 0.40-0.59: moderate, 0.60-0.79: strong, 0.80-1.00: very strong. DeVellis acknowledges that these cutoffs are somewhat arbitrary, but used by many scale development researchers.

As evidence of discriminant validity, the VEW constructs were hypothesized not to correlate with theoretically unrelated constructs. Unrelated constructs used in this study included Social Desirability and several of the Big Five personality factors. As hypothesized, the SDS was not significantly correlated with any of the VEW scales. The highest correlation was between the SDS and uberwelt ($r = .13$) which is extremely weak. Thus, evidence to support hypothesis 1 was obtained. The sample produced near-zero correlations between each VEW scale (63-item)

and the SDS: umwelt ($r = .07$), mitwelt ($r = .02$), eigenwelt ($r = .05$), and uberwelt ($r = .13$). Results were similar for the 20-item version: : umwelt ($r = .14$), mitwelt ($r = -.02$), eigenwelt ($r = .01$), and uberwelt ($r = .11$). See Table 2 for correlations for the 63-item and Table 9 for the 20-item version.

Hypothesis 2 purported that the PHQ-9 would be unrelated to each of the VEW measures. The PHQ-9 was not correlated with the eigenwelt or uberwelt scales for the 63-item version. It was negatively, albeit weakly, correlated with the umwelt ($r = -.14, p < .05$), and mitwelt ($r = -.16, p < .05$). This provided preliminary evidence to support hypothesis 2. Results were not significantly different for the 20-item measure: umwelt ($r = -.06$), mitwelt ($r = -.08$), eigenwelt ($r = .09$), and uberwelt ($r = .09$). See Table 2 for correlations for the 63-item and Table 9 for the 20-item version.

Each of the Big Five Personality traits was hypothesized to be uncorrelated with each VEW scale with the exception of the extroversion scale with the mitwelt scale. The extroversion scale was in fact uncorrelated with each of the VEW scales (63-items) except for the mitwelt scale which produced weak but significant correlation ($r = .34, p < .01$). See Table 3 for correlations. For the 20-item measure, results were similar with the mitwelt scale having the same correlation ($r = .34, p < .01$). See Table 11 for the 20-item version correlations. This provided preliminary evidence to support hypothesis 4.

The agreeableness scale produced weak but statistically significant correlations with each of the VEW scales for the 63-items. The highest correlation was between the agreeableness scale and the umwelt scale ($r = .31, p < .01$). The conscientiousness scale was correlated with only one of the VEW scales: the eigenwelt scale ($r = .24, p < .01$). Emotional stability was uncorrelated with any of the VEW scales. The Openness to Experience scale was; however,

moderately correlated with each of the VEW scales including umwelt ($r = .44, p < .01$), mitwelt ($r = .44, p < .01$), eigenwelt ($r = .39, p < .01$), and uberwelt ($r = .49$). Correlational data from the Big Five Personality Assessment predominantly did not provide support for hypothesis 3. There was evidence to support 2 out of the 3 hypothesis related to divergent validity.

For the 20-item measure results were similar. The agreeableness scale had the exact same correlation with the umwelt scale ($r = .31, p < .01$). The conscientiousness scale was also correlated with the eigenwelt scale and had the same exact correlation: ($r = .24, p < .01$). See Table 11 for the 20-item version correlations.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity can be inferred by constructs correlating with theoretically similar constructs (Clark, & Watson, 1995). The VEW scales were hypothesized to be significantly correlated with several constructs that were included in this study. As hypothesized, the Locus of Control Scale did correlate weakly but significantly to the eigenwelt scale (all initial items) ($r = .26, p < .01$). The correlation was slightly stronger with the 5 item eigenwelt scale: ($r = .29, p < .01$). This provides preliminary support for hypothesis 5 and also slight evidence that the shorter version is moving toward theoretically hypothesized connection. See Table 2 for 63-item correlations.

The Authenticity Scale subscale self-alienation was hypothesized to correlate negatively to the eigenwelt scale. The self-alienation scale did negatively correlate with the eigenwelt scale (all items) ($r = -.27, p < .01$). The self-alienation was negatively correlated with each of the additional VEW scales: umwelt ($r = -.29, p < .01$), mitwelt ($r = -.237, p < .01$), and uberwelt, ($p < -.258$).

For the 20-item measure, the self-alienation scale did negatively correlate with the eigenwelt scale ($r = -.31, p < .01$). This was a slight increase in correlational strength in the theoretically predicted direction. The self-alienation was negatively correlated with each of the additional VEW scales: umwelt ($r = -.19, p < .01$), mitwelt ($r = -.19, p < .01$), and uberwelt, $p = .02$). As the eigenwelt scale was hypothesized to be negatively correlated with the self-alienation subscale this provides preliminary evidence for construct validity. Additionally, the strength of the correlation increased in the theoretically predicted way. The other scales; however, were not predicted to be correlated with the self-alienation scale providing mixed results. See Table 9 for correlation matrix of the 20-item version.

The Spiritual Meaning Scale (SMS) was hypothesized to be significantly positively correlated with the uberwelt scale. The SMS was in fact moderately correlated with the uberwelt scale (all initial items) ($r = .54, p < .01$). The SMS was significantly but weakly correlated with all the additional VEW scales. See Table 2 for 63-item correlations.

For the 20-item measure, the SMS produced an even stronger correlation in the theoretically predicted direction: ($r = .60, p < .01$). The SMS was significantly but weakly correlated with all the additional VEW scales with the next highest correlation being between the SMS and the mitwelt scale ($r = .37, p < .01$). This provides evidence to support hypothesis 7 as well as evidence that the shorter (20-item) version of the VEW is moving closer toward theoretically predicted results. See Table 9 for the correlation matrix including the SMS.

It was hypothesized that the GAD-7 should be negatively correlated with eigenwelt and uberwelt dimensions. However, the GAD-7 was uncorrelated with any of the VEW scales. See Table 3 for correlations with the 63-items. Results with the 20-item version were similar. See

Table 10 for the 20-item version correlations. Thus, there was no evidence to support hypothesis 8.

The Antianthropocentrism (AA) subscale of the New Ecological Paradigm was theorized to be significantly positively correlated with the umwelt scale which it was ($r = .25, p < .01$). The AA subscale was also weakly but significantly correlated with the uberwelt scale ($r = .25, p < .01$). See Table 3 for 63-item correlations. Results from the 20-item version were similar with the AA subscale being correlated with the umwelt scale ($r = .23, p < .01$). The AA subscale was also weakly but significantly correlated with the mitwelt scale ($r = .27, p < .01$). See Table 10 for 20-item correlations. This provides weak, but preliminary support for hypothesis 9.

The PIL-SF was added to this study because it was hypothesized that it would correlate highly with the VEW eigenwelt and uberwelt dimensions. The PIL-SF was significantly correlated with each of the VEW scales with the highest correlations being eigenwelt ($r = .42, p < .01$) and uberwelt ($r = .49, p < .01$). See Table 3 for correlations with the 63-item version.

Results from the 20-item were similar as the PIL-SF correlated with each of the VEW scales. The highest correlations for the 20-item version were between the VEW eigenwelt and uberwelt scales ($r = .42, p < .01$) and ($r = .49, p < .01$) respectively. See Table 10 for correlation matrix. As the PIL-SF was most highly correlated with the two theorized constructs (eigenwelt and uberwelt) this provides preliminary evidence to support hypothesis 10; however, the PIL-SF was correlated with each of the VEW scales which make these results mixed.

It was hypothesized that the Social Well-Being Scale *Social Integration* Subscale would be positively correlated with the mitwelt dimension. The SWBS Social Integration subscale was significantly correlated with each of the VEW scales with the highest correlation being with the mitwelt ($r = .37, p < .01$). See Table 3 for results from the 63-items.

Results from the 20-item version were similar. The SWBS Social Integration subscale was significantly correlated with each of the VEW scales with the highest correlation being with the mitwelt scale ($r = .37, p < .01$). See Table 10 for correlation results of the 20-item version. The SWBS Social Integration subscale was correlated highest with the mitwelt scale which does offer preliminary evidence to support hypothesis 11; however, the SWBS was correlated with each of the VEW scales making these results mixed.

The Self-Compassion Short Form (SCS-SF) subscale Isolation was hypothesized to be negatively correlated with mitwelt. Additionally, mindfulness subscale was hypothesized to be positively correlated with eigenwelt. The SCS-SF isolation subscale was uncorrelated with any of the VEW scales. The mindfulness subscale was not correlated with any of the VEW scales except for uberwelt ($r = .3, p < .01$). See Table 5 for results from the 63-item version.

Results from the 20-item version were similar. The SCS-SF isolation subscale was uncorrelated with any of the VEW scales. The mindfulness subscale was not correlated with any of the VEW scales except for umwelt ($r = .25, p < .01$) and uberwelt ($r = .15, p < .01$). See Table 12 for results from the 20-item version. Thus, there was no evidence to support hypothesis 12 or 13.

The SONG was included in this study as it was hypothesized to be correlated with the uberwelt dimension. For the 63-items, the SONG was weakly correlated with both the eigenwelt ($r = .2, p < .01$), and uberwelt ($r = .22, p < .01$) scales. See Table 3 for results from the 63-item version. Results from the 20-item version were similar. The SONG was weakly correlated with both the eigenwelt ($r = .20, p < .01$), and uberwelt ($r = .22, p < .01$) scales. Additionally, the SONG was extremely weakly correlated with the mitwelt ($r = .15, p < .01$). This provides weak evidence that supports hypothesis 14.

Overall, there was weak to moderate correlational data to support 4 out of the 11 hypotheses related to convergent validity. Results were extremely similar for both the 63 items and the 20-item measure. Correlational data indicated mixed support for an additional 4 out of the 11 hypotheses. There was evidence to support the remaining 3 hypotheses. Thus, there was at least some evidence to support approximately 73% of convergent validity hypothesis.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study attempted to psychometrically test the newly created Values of Existential Worlds (VEW) measure. This measure assesses how much value individuals place on existing in each of the four existential worlds – physical, social, psychological, and spiritual/philosophical. The sample of 202 adults provided preliminary evidence for good internal reliability of each VEW scale, and both convergent and divergent validity for each scale.

After whittling down the items to the 20-item measure, factor analysis offered preliminary support for each of the four-world scales being unidimensional as hypothesized. Several limitations in the design and sample are discussed. Philosophical concerns are explored and implications for future research and practice are also discussed.

Reliability

The VEW scales attempted to tap each of the constructs from a variety of angles including the importance of *thinking, accepting, being aware of, seeking, making choices, understanding, doing, having, enjoying, sharing, learning, exploring, and reading*, Helms et al., (2006) note that scales using this structure usually yield lower alpha coefficients for a variety of reasons. Thus, the extremely high alpha coefficients (near .9 for each of the VEW scales) were surprising. The higher means and lower standard deviations of items may have resulted in a restricted range of scores accounting for some of this high internal reliability.

Validity

Demographics

Statistical data provided evidence that age, gender, religious beliefs, political beliefs, frequency of engaging in spiritual practices, and frequency of engaging in mental health practices were demographic variables that may impact the way VEW scale items were endorsed.

As age increased, so did endorsement of both the umwelt and uberwelt scales. Differences were found to be statistically significant between several of the age categories.

What might be the reason older individuals endorsed higher umwelt scores? Do older individuals have more physical problems which may force their hand toward valuing the physical world – a world that may become increasingly more dangerous? One of the demographic questions was “number of physical health concerns” to attempt to explore this very question. This item was added as it was hypothesized that it would correlate to the umwelt scale. After running ANOVA on number of health concerns and the umwelt scale, the data did not support this hypothesis.

So why might individuals value their existence specifically in the physical world more? The umwelt scale attempted to capture *valuing* of the physical world in part by valuing acceptance of the existential bounds related to the physical world – that we are biological beings and that death is inevitable. It may be that older individuals simply have more acceptance of the body and its limitations not because of health problems and being confronted with the “negative” side of mortality, but perhaps a deeper and more full understanding of the cycle of life and death leads to an appreciation of the way we can move through the world as physical beings.

Older individuals also endorsed higher uberwelt scores. Solomon, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski (2015) offer ample empirical evidence to support Terror Management Theory which may explain this finding. Terror Management Theory posits that we are beings smart enough to be aware of our own mortality, but not smart enough to “solve” the problem of death. This causes intense terror and so humans engage in a variety of activities to mitigate this terror. One of the ways to mitigate the terror of death is to philosophically “live” forever as a “soul”. While not strictly the domain of religious/spiritual individuals, the soul as they write, “...was created in

the big bang of an irresistible psychological force – our will to live forever- colliding with the immutable biological fact of death.”

Solomon and colleagues (2015) offer empirical evidence for their theory through a series of studies which include “death reminders” strengthening people’s belief in God. They remind us that “cultural worldviews [including religion] help manage existential terror by convincing us that we are special beings with souls and identities that will persist long past our own death.” As we age, we become more aware of our impending death and so may tend to value our existence in a spiritual/philosophical realm to help us mitigate the terror of our impending death.

Women tended to endorse valuing their physical and social dimensions more than men. There is no evidence to support women being inherently more wired to be social than men; however, women in Western cultures do tend to be more connected which seems the result of valuing their social existence more. However, this finding may be a simple artifact of the power of cultural influences on individuals. Men in western cultures are socialized to value rugged individualism and this socialization begins as soon as we are born (Bem, 1993). The very construct of gender is a social one. Money and Tucker (1975) write that we learn gender identities and expected gender roles in the same way we “learn” speech. Cultural expectations become a kind of fifth existential boundary that is more permeable than the others. Women reported valuing their existence in the social dimension more than men, but does this mean that women make a conscious choice to do so? Simone de Beauvoir (1949) writes in *The Second Sex*, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.”

The more someone claimed to engage in their personal spiritual practice, the more they tended to report valuing the spiritual dimension of their existence. This seems perfectly logical.

If one claims to value having muscles they will exercise. If one claims to value spiritual existence, they will do spiritual things.

Divergent Validity

Umwelt - The SDS was uncorrelated with the umwelt scale as hypothesized. The Big Five subscales were all uncorrelated with the umwelt scale with the exception of the openness to experience scale which was moderately correlated with the umwelt scale. Openness to Experience explores how much a person is willing to try new things and experience new experiences. Individuals who score high on Openness are said to be curious, open-minded, and interested in art and culture. Valuing existence in the physical world may prerequisite to being able to be open to new experiences – I may not be open to trying new food if I don't value taste as a sense. As hypothesized, the PHQ-9 was negatively, albeit weakly, correlated with the umwelt scale. Taken together, these findings offer support for divergent validity of the umwelt scale.

Mitwelt - The mitwelt scale was not correlated with the SDS which was hypothesized. Like the umwelt scale, the mitwelt scale was not correlated with the PHQ-9. The mitwelt scale was also correlated with the Big Five subscale Openness to Experience. Again, valuing a way of being (socially) may be required before one can be open to experience within this dimension (e.g. I must value or at least acknowledge social existence before I am intentionally open to specific experiences that may make up this way of being.)

Eigenwelt - The eigenwelt scale was uncorrelated with the SDS as hypothesized. It was not significantly correlated with the PHQ-9. The eigenwelt scale was correlated with one of the Big Five subscales: the conscientiousness scale. Conscientiousness is related to being careful and diligent. It suggests a desire to do a task well, and to take tasks seriously. The eigenwelt scale

attempts to capture how important an inner, psychological life is to an individual. It may be that being careful and diligent are ways of being that are important to the valuation of one's inner life.

Uberwelt – The SDS and the PHQ-9 were both uncorrelated with the uberwelt scale. The Big Five subscales were uncorrelated to the uberwelt scale with the exception of the openness to experience scale. The openness scale correlated highest with the uberwelt scale. Individuals who score high on the openness scale are said to be curious, open-minded, and interested in art and culture. The uberwelt scale assesses specifically value of finding *meaning* and valuing spiritual/philosophical existence which is loosely related to being curious, open-minded, and interested in art and culture. Curiosity and open mindedness may in many ways be related to a spiritual and philosophical way of being.

Convergent Validity

Umwelt - The Antianthropocentrism (AA) subscale of the New Ecological Paradigm was theorized to be significantly positively correlated with the umwelt scale which it was ($r = .23, p < .01$). The AA subscale was added as it was theorized to touch on the “creatureliness” of humanity. Mortality is an existential boundary. For individuals valuing the physical dimension, it was hypothesized that they would be more accepting of what existing in this dimension actually entails – being a biological entity who will eventually die and is not different or “better than” other biological entities (which is what the AA taps). The umwelt scale attempts to measure this acceptance of mortality and acceptance of one's biological existence.

In addition to the hypothesized correlations, the umwelt scale was correlated with several additional scales that were added to assess convergent validity for the other existential worlds. For instance, the umwelt scale was correlated ($r = .44, p < .01$) with the *openness* subscale. It

was also correlated with the *agreeableness* ($r = .32, p < .01$). See Tables 10-12. These additional correlations may provide additional insight into additional ways that people who value their physical world experience their world. They may be more likely to be open to new experiences and agreeable toward individuals. Openness to experience especially seems to theoretically connect with the construct that the *umwelt* scale is attempting to tap – valuing physical world and openness to experiences (experiences often existing within the physical world) seem to reasonably be connected.

Mitwelt - The *Mitwelt* scale was hypothesized to be correlated with the Social Well-Being Social Integration subscale and the Extroversion subscale of the Big Five Personality Test. *Mitwelt* was in fact correlated with the Social Well-Being Social Integration subscale ($r = .37, p < .01$). It was also correlated with the extroversion scale ($r = .34, p < .01$). It may be that valuing one's existence is a prerequisite to having well-being in a dimension with "extroversion" being a particular way of being that individuals who do value this dimension tend to manifest more often.

In addition to the hypothesized correlations, the *mitwelt* scale was correlated with several additional scales and subscales which were included to assess validity for the other existential world constructs. These correlations which were not hypothesized include: the spiritual meaning scale ($r = .22, p < .01$) and the Purpose in Life Test (short form) ($r = .39, p < .01$). This is unsurprising as the relational component of psychotherapy is paramount in existential psychotherapy. Authentic connection with another is a pathway toward authentic connection with one's self. Thus, those who value their social world in which they may be intentional about authentic connection with others may be obtaining personal/spiritual meaning.

Eigenwelt – Several scale and subscales that were hypothesized to correlate with the VEW eigenwelt scale including the Locus of Control Scale. Individuals who have more perceived internal sense of control were hypothesized to value their internal world more. Valuing existence within the psychological dimension is hypothesized to be a precondition to having a sense of internal control. The Locus of Control Scale did correlate with the eigenwelt scale though this was not a strong connection ($r = .29, p < .01$). The Authenticity Scale subscale self-alienation was hypothesized to correlate negatively to the eigenwelt scale. The self-alienation scale did negatively correlate with the eigenwelt scale ($r = -.31, p < .01$). Self-alienation is a closely related construct. The eigenwelt scale attempts to measure how much one values an inner psychological world where the self-alienation scale measures how disconnected one is from one's experiences. The self- The self-alienation subscale of the SCS attempts to measure how much one sees oneself as different from others – disconnection from a common humanity underlying our existence. It may be that one must accept and value existence as a psychological being to tap into this common humanity aspect of self-compassion. I believe that these findings provide moderate preliminary evidence for convergent validity of the eigenwelt scale.

In addition to the hypothesized correlations, the eigenwelt scale was correlated with several additional scales and subscales which were included to assess validity for the other existential world constructs. The eigenwelt scale correlated significantly with the spiritual meaning scale ($r = .37, p < .01$). Additionally, it was correlated with the purpose in life test ($r = .42, p < .01$). All of the four existential world scales were correlated with both the SMS and the PIL. A similar hypothesis could be postulated for all of them – that valuing one's existence in a specific dimension leads to personal fulfillment and spiritual meaning (regardless of one's

spiritual belief system). As outlined by van Deurzen (2012) and various others, the four worlds are intricately intertwined.

Uberwelt - The uberwelt scale had some of the clearest and strongest correlations with hypothesized constructs. It was hypothesized that the Spiritual Meaning Scale would be highly correlated with the uberwelt scale which it was. The Spiritual Meaning Scale measures how much existential/spiritual meaning a person *has*, where the uberwelt scale measures how important it is for a person to exist within the spiritual/philosophical dimension. It may be important to first value this aspect of one's existence before meaning can be obtained.

The PIL and the SONG, scales measuring level of existential meaning and desire to search for existential meaning were also hypothesized to correlate with the uberwelt scale. The correlated moderately while the SONG was slightly weaker. Again, the valuing of one's existence in a given dimension is hypothesized to be a important to attaining various forms of "well-being" within this dimension (e.g. valuing a philosophical dimension is a prerequisite to being able to find meaning within this dimension).

Like the other dimensions, the uberwelt scale was correlated with several additional scales and subscales which were included to assess validity for the other existential world constructs. For instance, the uberwelt scale was significantly correlated with the SWB scale ($r = .23, p < .01$) and the openness scale ($r = .49, p < .01$). There is a clear connection between the openness scale as the construct of openness is often associated with interest in art, beauty, and the abstract – all aspects included in the uberwelt construct. The idea of being "open" to the spiritual aspect of life can be seen cross cultural and time in religio-spiritual texts. Openness to God and love is valued in the Judeo-Christian tradition while openness to experience is valued in many Eastern traditions.

Each VEW subscale was significantly correlated with each other (see Table 8). The lowest correlation was between the mitwelt and the ubwerwelt scales ($r = .37, p < .01$). The highest was between the umwelt and uberwelt ($r = .51, p < .01$). There are many potential explanations for these correlations. This may be simply an artifact of measurement design and the similarity of the wording of the questions. It may be that individuals who value one aspect of their existence tend, on average, to value other areas more. Awareness, education level, and privilege may all be extraneous variables impacting the results.

Philosophical Considerations

There is an inherent tension in this work given that I am attempting to operationalize an existential model. Broadly, existential practitioners and researchers are weary of operationalizing constructs and models (Vos, 2013; van Bruggen et al., 2015). Concerns about operationalizing constructs and models stems from existentialism's phenomenological heritage. Once we begin to pick something apart and attempt to learn objective information we begin to move toward a dualistic/Cartesian understanding of the world. This dualistic thinking is antithetical to the phenomenological tradition – that there is no world independent from our experience of it (Zahavi, 2003).

Van Deurzen (2012) reminds her readers that existential psychology should be wary of reducing the human spirit by the over-use and inappropriate use of scientific thinking. She cautions several times that the four-worlds model should not be thought of as a kind of mindless or easy map of humans. She understands that the four-worlds are complex and interdependent, and that this model is just that – a *descriptive* model for understanding existence. Throughout the process of this study, I went back and forth questioning myself and my commitment to the

philosophical tradition that I so love. At times I became concerned that I might be “betraying” my fellow existentialists by attempting to reduce the theory and make neat little boxes of each dimension of existence. In attempting to get my survey posted on one of the listservs which has a strong humanistic/existential bent, I was met with immediate skepticism by the listserv gatekeeper. I was asked for clarification about the intent and content of this very work. The gatekeeper expressed concern that people would react negatively to my survey and was hesitant to post it. I carefully explained my reasoning and my own humanistic philosophy. It felt as though I was in the 1950s and needed to display my loyalty to the cause.

The philosophy of existentialism is, however, not one that lends itself well to dogmatic thinking. Ultimately the words of Nietzsche gave me pause, "Convictions are more dangerous foes of truth than lies". The pursuit of truth is much more important than any attempt to protect the purity of a philosophy or way of doing therapy.

The conversion of the four-worlds into psychometrically measurable data is reductionistic. There is just no current way to understand this model in a way that does not reduce it. But reducing does not mean destroying. In fact, my motivation for this study is an attempt to bring scientific rigor and provide evidence for the model so that more data can be collected and the existential orientation can gain the same level of evidence based practice as more manualized treatments.

Even the way the VEW is structured *within* the framework of current scientific methodology is not a perfect “tapping” into the construct. There is no way to quantify and measure the infinitely multidimensional and ultimately un-operationalizable phenomena that is “existence”.

This is true for all sciences – lines need to be drawn and constructs operationalized for sure, but rarely is the starting point so vast. I think of the work-around that I created as like an oil derrick that needs to build a pipe at a bit of an angle to hit a really deep well. Since “existence” cannot be measured, I need to find some intermediary construct that might be at a bit of an angle to, but ultimately tap into the deep well. I cannot measure existence, but I can measure how much someone *values* existence.

The freedom to make intentional choice based on one’s own will is baked into the core of existential philosophy. Sartre says “We are our choices.” Frankl exclaims, “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” The Buddha echoes these sentiments from millennia earlier “We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think.” One of the choices we make is what we *value*. What we find important is what will guide our decisions and how we exist in the world.

In his review of what is most important to the counseling psychology profession, Howard (1992) writes, “...if there is anything akin to the heart or core of the identity of counseling psychology, it lies in an appreciation of the personal, the subjective, the individual, and the agentic” (Howard, 1992, p. 419). Counseling psychologists care about peoples’ personal, subjective experiences and their ability to be active agents using values to guide them toward their desired ways of being. There are few things more closely related to the personal, the subjective, and the agentic than values. Counseling psychologists need to understand what people believe and value in order to help them live the authentic life that they want and deserve to live. Exploration of values and ways of existing in the world lies at the very heart of the profession.

Temporal stability is a philosophical concern for any values study. I consider temporal stability a philosophical point of discussion rather than a scientific study limitation because I do not believe that temporal stability *matters* for the scientific exploration/ psychometric assessment at this stage. Temporal stability relates to how much a value will remain stable as time passes. If a child holds a belief will they still hold this belief as an adult? Philosophers have been debating the nature of the temporal stability/transience of belief structures for some time. According to Loeb (1995) famous philosophers David Hume and Charles Peirce argued about this very point in great detail. Both agreed that an “unreflective individual” will paradoxically have more stable beliefs, but they disagreed about whether sustained rational and critical thought would produce a stable set of beliefs or lead to a state of perpetual skepticism/ shifting beliefs.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations arose during the construction and analysis of the VEW scales. The expert review analysis of fidelity to the constructs produced a restricted range of responses with a small standard deviation ($SD = .707$). The mean ($M = 3.5$) was rather high (as there were only 5 response options). This limited my ability to ascertain the degree of quality of items. Future iterations of expert review of items could include more frequency options with clear qualitative anchors and the addition of several dimensions of quality beyond fidelity to the construct (e.g. clarity, ease of understanding, etc.). DeVellis (2017) suggests just such expert review; however, I was attempting to balance expert reviewer’s time with the amount of data I could collect.

Another limitation to this study is the restricted range of scores for each of the VEW scales. Items could be endorsed on a scale of 1 through 7; however, each scale had a mean over 5.2. The mean total scale endorsement was 5.45 out of 7. The range of standard deviations was .72 to .99 which may also be low. This low variability and high average scores may have been

the reason for the high internal reliability and factor structure that indicated one primary factor accounting for the largest share of all variance (32.7%). In fact 59 out of the 63 items loaded onto factor one greater than .4.

Sampling and participant demographic restrictions are another potential concern. The majority of participants were female ($n = 126, 62.4\%$), between the ages of 31-45 years old ($n = 74, 36.6\%$), White ($n = 158, 78\%$), straight ($n = 159, 78.7\%$), and liberal ($n = 142, 70\%$). Given the listservs that were used to obtain participants, the gender and political views makes sense. Women outnumber men in counseling and psychological field.

Another limitation related to sampling was the inability to ascertain if individuals who took the survey were in the field of psychology or not. The survey went out to several APA division listservs as well as to individuals not affiliated with the field. It is possible that there is a significant difference in how psychological professionals read and responded to items vs. how non-professionals endorsed items. Future iterations of scale development could include a simple demographic question asking for professional affiliation.

Implications for Practice

Van Deurzen (2012, p. 235) writes, “The existential method seeks to encourage clients into further examination of their assumptions and their underlying value system. What ultimately matters in existential work is to determine what it is that really matters to clients, not what ought to matter to them or what the therapist dictates that should matter to them.” The VEW was created to help a psychologist determine what ways of being are important to the client – not to impose what a psychologist thinks a client should find important. Coming from the philosophical tradition of existentialism, specifically the daseinsanalysis branch, the VEW is an attempt to help psychologists learn how a client exists and in what ways they would like to exist. The VEW is an

attempt at marrying existential philosophy with contemporary psychological testing to create a new and clinically useful assessment for evidence-based existential case conceptualization.

In their review of evidence-based case conceptualization, Christen, McLeod, and Jenson-Doss (2015) discuss the importance of using both nomothetic assessments (such as screeners normed on a specific population) and idiographic measures that help a clinician identify how variables are “patterned uniquely within the individual”. An ideographic measure shows how a person has grown or changed based on previous data from that specific person. Idiographic measures can be useful in assessing the influence of context on behavior and helping clinicians form and test hypotheses. Nomothetic measures provide data based on how an individual scores based on some population of peers.

The VEW measure could potentially provide clinicians with both nomothetic and idiographic data. Nomothetic data provided from this measure could include how much value a person places on specific dimension compared to others who take the assessment, while idiographic information will include a unique profile that will give the clinician data on value placed on a dimension relative to the client’s other endorsed values (e.g. does someone value living more in the physical or psychological world) and if this valuation changes over time.

Psychologists engaged in the provision of psychotherapy spend much of their time attempting to understand the existence of clients (Cook et al., 2010). Understanding experience is the very “bread and butter” of psychology (Reid, Flowers, and Larkin, 2005). Learning how a client exists in the world and what they find important– their physicality, their social connections, their thoughts and beliefs, and their meaning-making process is an imperative part of most psychological interventions. Clinical psychological triages and intakes, often the first contact a psychologist has with a client, are structured so as to elicit as much data as possible

from clients about their existence. The fundamental immediate question is: who is this person and why are they coming in for psychological help? Data is gathered about a client's existence in several dimensions so as to ensure most appropriate type of psychological intervention as possible.

Psychotherapeutic work often involves exploration of a client's existence to "treat" concerns that exist within a certain domain (e.g. social skills training, challenging automatic thinking, encouraging behavioral activation, or inventorying values). Training, theoretical orientation, setting, and presenting concerns are all variables that impact the breadth and depth of exploration of client's present and historical experience, but to a greater or lesser extent, all psychologists deal in the art of client's existence - existence that lies outside of their own.

The VEW measure could be used to psychologists seeking diagnostic clarification and possible routes for counseling interventions. For instance, valuing (or not) specific dimensions of existence provides a frame of reference for the psychologist to understand possible *whys* that a client may be experiencing psychological distress in their life. For a client to deny the importance of their social existence, yet to experience suffering that clearly exists within this dimension (interpersonal conflict) may help a psychologist and the client understand a possible source of the distress – a source that lies far beyond the interpersonal conflict itself.

A psychologist could provide countless hours of work aimed at increasing a client's social skills with little effect on a client who does not truly *value* this aspect of their life. We can teach children rote mathematical formulas, but this information is no different than learning meaningless strings of letters and numbers if the child does not see its importance of mathematics her life. The VEW in its current iteration is not meant to focus on *specifics* of diagnostic clarification. It is doubtful that a psychologist could make any meaningful diagnostic

assessment using this measure alone. However, it may offer an often-overlooked step – the exploration of client values and perspective – which are both important in determining where to go for further diagnostic clarification and further clinical work.

Psychological intakes often use language such as “gathering a client’s history”. Questions are often framed in such a way as to obtain “dead” information – this is information that is based on events and circumstances long past. Where were you born? Does anyone in your family have mental illness? When was the last time you used a particular drug? Existential psychotherapy offers a different – and perhaps more comprehensive- framework to aid in the exploration and understanding of the living and multidimensional *existence* of the individuals that we work with. As Rollo May states (1983), existence comes from the Latin root of “existere” which means “to emerge”. Existential theory holds that humans should be understood as growing, emerging, non-static beings. Stationary pieces of data do not do justice to a multidimensional human – a more comprehensive and holistic exploration of human existence could be beneficial.

Gathering psychological data in an existential way can add depth and texture to client conceptualization and “treatment” no matter the theoretical orientation of the clinician. This information can potentially assist with the therapeutic relationship, and mutual collaboration of goals – both of which have been found by the APA task force on Evidence-Based Relationships (Norcross & Lambert, 2018) to be “demonstrably effective” aspects of psychotherapy. Indeed, research suggests that most clients who terminate prematurely do so because of problems with empathy, collaboration on what problems should be addressed in therapy, and other aspects of *disconnection* with their clinician (Ogrodniczuk, Joyce, & Piper, 2005). Simply, connection and understanding drive effective therapy, while disconnection and confusion work counter effective

therapeutic work. Collection of data effectively assists with connection and empathy; it then holds, such data collection should increase the efficacy of therapeutic work.

Overall, I believe this VEW construction and validation study to be successful in several ways. Starting with the philosophically abstract: this study provides preliminary evidence to support the idea that the 4-worlds model can be operationalized and psychometrically examined.

Furthermore, this study provided evidence that one can measure individuals' *value* of each world. The high internal reliability, factor structure of each scale, and surprising unidimensionality of the full-scale provide support for the four-worlds as explicated by van Deurzen (2005). It is my hope that this study will spur further research on this particular existential model, as well as provide encouragement to other humanists and existentialists to create and scientifically examine measurements of other equally "fuzzy" models and constructs. Harkening back to the words of Levitt et al., (2005) "If humanistic psychologists are to show that therapy works the way they say it will work, their instruments need to reflect their own theories of development and models of psychotherapy." I say we need to continually answer this call with action.

Many of the less manualized forms of psychotherapy like humanistic and existential schools are in danger because "psychotherapy" is becoming focused on shorter, medicalized, and deficits-focused "treatment". To me, existential therapy offers some of the most beautiful and true wisdom that guides effective therapeutic work. However, a valid criticism of the theory in modern times is its lack of empirical support. Thoreau says in *Walden*, "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them." I hope in this work you can find one brick of many for the foundation we need to build.

TABLES

Table 1

Internal Reliability for VEW Scales (63-item VEW)

Variable	1	2	3	4	α	M	SD
1. VEW: Umwelt	-				.89	5.29	.80
2. VEW: Mitwelt	.57**	-			.92	5.45	.72
3. VEW: Eigenwelt	.61**	.45**	-		.94	5.64	.84
4. VEW: Uberwelt	.66**	.56**	.64**	-	.94	5.42	.99

** $p < .01$.

Table 2

Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 2 (63-item VEW)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	α	M	SD
1. VEW: Umwelt	-										.89	5.39	.8
2. VEW: Mitwelt	.57**	-									.92	5.45	.72
3. VEW: Eigenwelt	.61**	.45	-								.94	5.64	.84
4. VEW: Uberwelt	.66**	.56**	.64	-							.94	5.42	.99
5. Social Desirability	.07	.02	.05	.13	-						.82	1.59	.24
6. Locus of Control	.04	.10	.26**	.06	.25**	-					.63	3.26	.66
7. Authenticity Scale (AS)	-.10	-.07	-.07	-.11	.09	.22**	-				.58	3.88	.61
8. AS Self- Alienation	-.29**	-.24**	-.27**	-.26**	.09	.21**	.73**	-			.87	2.45	1.29
9. Spiritual Meaning Scale	.36**	.32**	.37**	.54**	-.031	.27**	-.26*	-.39*	-		.92	3.85	.78
10. PHQ-9	-.14*	-.16*	-.00	-.00	.07	.20**	.45**	.49**	.18**	-	.89	1.61	.62

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 3

Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 3 (63-item VEW)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. VEW: Umwelt	-									.89	5.39	.8
2. VEW: Mitwelt	.57**	-								.92	5.45	.72
3. VEW: Eigenwelt	.61**	.45**	-							.94	5.64	.84
4. VEW: Uberwelt	.66**	.56**	.64**	-						.94	5.42	.99
5. Generalized Anxiety Disorder	-.05	-.05	-.11	-.00	-					.90	1.71	.69
6. Anti- anthropocentrism	.23**	.13*	.27**	.12*	.00	-				.56	3.89	.73
7. Purpose in Life Test (SF)	.26**	.30**	.47**	.46**	-.37*	.04	-			.82	5.54	.97
8. Social Well Being	.17*	.36**	.24**	.22**	-.36*	.02	.51**	-		.95	5.09	1.32
9. Seeking of Noetic Goals	.11	.15*	.20*	.21**	.39**	.03	-.18	-.23**	-	.85	2.41	.55

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 4

Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 4 (63-item VEW)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	α	M	SD
1. VEW: Umwelt	-									.89	5.39	.8
2. VEW: Mitwelt	.57**	-								.92	5.45	.72
3. VEW: Eigenwelt	.61**	.45**	-							.94	5.64	.84
4. VEW: Uberwelt	.66**	.56**	.64**	-						.94	5.42	.99
5. Extroversion	.09	.37**	.01	.04	-					.68	3.84	1.70
6. Agreeableness	.24**	.18*	.23**	.27**	.00	-				.4	5.21	1.14
7. Conscientiousness	.09	.11*	.33**	.06	.02	.17*	-			.5	5.45	1.11
8. Emotional Stability	.08	.08	.25*	.25**	.05	.37**	.31**	-		.73	4.54	1.45
9. Openness	.36**	.40**	.39**	.45**	.22**	.16*	.12	.21**	-	.45	5.52	1.00

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5

Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 5 (63-item VEW)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	α	M	SD
1. VEW: Umwelt	-										.89	5.39	.8
2. VEW: Mitwelt	.57**	-									.92	5.45	.72
3. VEW: Eigenwelt	.61**	.45**	-								.94	5.64	.84
4. VEW: Uberwelt	.66**	.56**	.64**	-							.94	5.42	.99
5. Self Compassion Scale (SCS)	.31**	.16*	.16*	.17*	-						.89	3.23	.77
6. SCS Overidentification	.12	.07	.00	.01	.83**	-					.80	2.81	1.17
7. SCS Self Kindness	.36**	.16*	.19**	.17*	.82**	.52**	-				.62	3.35	.93
8.SCS Common Humanity	.38**	.23**	.22**	.36**	.70**	.41**	.61**	-			.61	3.44	.97
9. SCS Isolation	.19**	.09	.08	.08	.81**	.69**	.53*	.39**	-		.62	2.97	1.09
10. SCS Mindfulness	.30**	.09	.14	.19**	.66**	.43**	.53**	.48**	.42**	-	.59	3.79	.71

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Table 6

Results from a Factor Analysis of the 63-item VEW Maximum Likelihood Oblimin Rotation (.4 and higher loadings included)

VEW item	Factor loading												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Factor 1: Umwelt													
1. Be aware of my physical body						.77							
2. Think about how my body exists in space					.53		.41					.51	
3. Accept the fact that my body will eventually die					.87								
4. Accept that I am composed of flesh and blood					.77								
5. Ponder the fact that my life right now depends on my body					.51	.40							
6. Come to terms with a cycle of health and illness in my human body					.61		.43						
7. Be thoughtful about my own body					.48	.79							
8. Think about my own biology					.58								
9. Accept mortality as a condition of life					.86								
10. Think about how the weather outside might affect my experience													
11. Take in the world through all my senses (touch, taste, feel, sight)						.41							
12. Be mindful of a pleasant experience		.48											
13. Seek out pleasant physical experiences						.46							
14. Make choices to care for my body						.64							
Factor 2: Mitwelt													
1. Understand current culture										.45		.41	
2. Interact with people					.77								
3. Spend time around people					.78								
4. Know my neighbors					.40								
5. Make choices based on my social world					.48								
6. Accept that we live in an interconnected world					.48							.75	
7. Encounter every person in a real way					.45							.54	
8. Have meaningful relationships with people that are important to me					.52								.44
9. Make choices that lead me to connect with people					.75		.41						
10. Enjoy a chat with people					.71								
11. Be aware of other people's existence					.48								
12. Be part of society					.63								
13. Do things that make me feel engaged with others.					.85								
14. Share my thoughts with other people					.73								
15. Enjoy my social life					.71								
16. Think about the social world I live in					.47								
Factor 3: Eigenwelt													
1. Make choices to feel at home with myself										.46			.66

2. Take time just for me	.47			.78
3. Think about who I want to be	.59		.49	.49
4. Acknowledge that I alone must make decisions				
5. Consider my own wants and needs	.49		.42	.79
6. Learn more about myself	.59	.48		.69
7. Accept that my own inner world is separate from others	.46		.47	.46
8. Think independently			.79	
9. Value my own ideas			.83	.42
10. Think about why I sometimes become anxious	.99			.43
11. Learn about what causes my anxiety	.89			.53
12. Learn about what "makes me tick"	.67	.64		.44
13. Explore my own psychology	.58	.59		.52
14. Explore my uniqueness	.50		.51	.46
15. Know who I am			.56	.57
16. Accept that decisions are only mine to make			.55	
17. Do things to learn more about myself	.59		.43	.59
Factor 4: Uberwelt				
1. Consider abstract concepts like truth and beauty		.42	.86	
2. Think about what I find to be meaningful	.42		.62	.54
3. Do things to explore abstract concepts like truth and beauty		.46	.89	
4. Move toward making my life meaningful	.44			.75
5. Think about what is meaningful to me	.47	.41	.47	.73
6. Think carefully about what I think is right or wrong			.49	.41 .49
7. Seek beauty			.63	
8. Consider my personal values	.51		.40	.48 .54
9. Consider what my life means to me	.47		.40	.43 .55
10. Find importance in something larger than myself	.67			.42
11. Think about a spiritual or higher aspect of life	.89			
12. Seek out spiritual experiences	.97			
13. Seek wisdom	.54		.42	.41
14. Reevaluate my own morals on occasion	.54	.41	.52	.41
15. Read something that is philosophical	.47		.51	
16. Explore the philosophical side of life	.47	.44	.50	

Note Only Factor loadings > .4 were included

Table 7

Scree Plot of the 63-item VEW (Maximum Likelihood Oblimin Rotation)

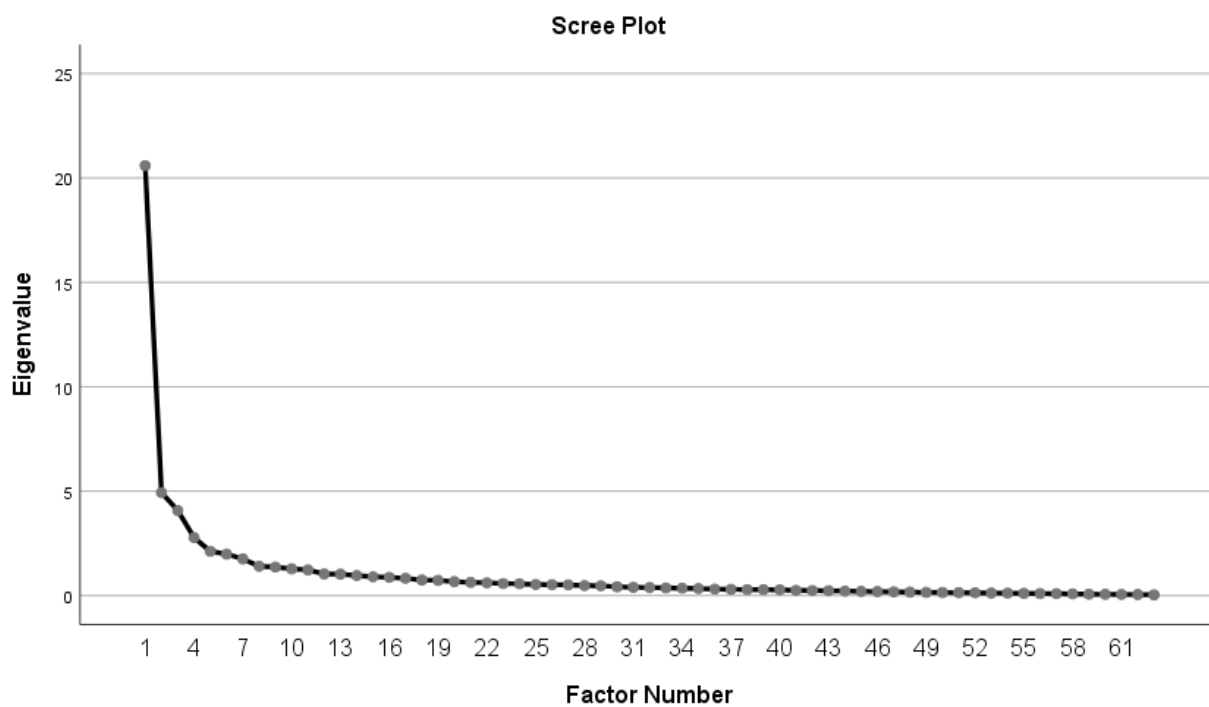


Table 8

Internal Reliability for VEW Short Form Scales (20-item VEW)

Variable	1	2	3	4	α	M	SD
1. VEW: Umwelt	-				.87	5.09	1.12
2. VEW: Mitwelt	.41.**	-			.81	5.48	.81
3. VEW: Eigenwelt	.40**	.35**	-		.84	5.77	.86
4. VEW: Uberwelt	.51**	.36**	.37**	-	.87	5.25	1.28

** $p < .01$.

Table 9

Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 2 (20-item VEW)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	α	M	SD
1. VEW: Umwelt	-										.87	5.09	1.12
2. VEW: Mitwelt	.41.* *	-									.81	5.48	.81
3. VEW: Eigenwelt	.40**	.35**	-								.84	5.77	.86
4. VEW: Uberwelt	.51**	.36**	.37**	-							.87	5.25	1.28
5. Social Desirability	.14*	-.02	.01	.11	-						.82	1.59	.24
6. Locus of Control	-.07	.10	.29**	.07	-.25**	-					.63	3.26	.66
7. Authenticity Scale (AS)	-.05	-.06	-.15	-.18*	.09	-.22**	-				.58	3.88	.61
8. AS Self- Alienation	-.19**	-.18**	-.31**	-.26**	.09	-.21*	.73**	-			.87	2.45	1.29
9. Spiritual Meaning Scale	.26	.22**	.37**	.60**	-.031	.27**	-.27*	-.39*	-		.92	3.85	.78
10. PHQ-9	-.06	-.08*	-.09	-.09	.07	-.20*	.43**	.49**	-.18*	-	.89	1.61	.62

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 10

Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 3 (20-item VEW)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	α	M	SD
1. VEW: Umwelt	-									.87	5.09	1.12
2. VEW: Mitwelt	.41.* *	-								.81	5.48	.81
3. VEW: Eigenwelt	.40**	.35**	-							.84	5.77	.86
4. VEW: Uberwelt	.51**	.36**	.37**	-						.87	5.25	1.28
5. Generalized Anxiety Disorder	-.05	-.05	-.11	-.00	-					.90	1.71	.69
6. Anti- anthropocentrism	.23**	.13*	.27**	.12*	.00	-				.56	3.89	.73
7. Purpose in Life Test (SF)	.38**	.39**	.42**	.49**	-.37*	.04	-			.82	5.54	.97
8. Social Well Being	.22**	.37**	.21**	.23**	-.36*	.02	.51**	-		.95	5.09	1.32
9. Seeking of Noetic Goals	.08	.15*	.20**	.22**	.39**	.03	-.18	-.23**	-	.85	2.41	.55

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 11

Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 4 (20-item VEW)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. VEW: Umwelt	-									.87	5.09	1.12
2. VEW: Mitwelt	.41.* *	-								.81	5.48	.81
3. VEW: Eigenwelt	.40**	.35**	-							.84	5.77	.86
4. VEW: Uberwelt	.51**	.36**	.37**	-						.87	5.25	1.28
5. Extroversion	.17*	.34**	.02	.03	-					.68	3.84	1.70
6. Agreeableness	.31**	.23**	.25**	.27**	.00	-				.4	5.21	1.14
7. Conscientiousness	.06	.17*	.24**	.09	.02	.17*	-			.5	5.45	1.11
8. Emotional Stability	.15*	.15*	.15*	.19**	.06	.37**	.31**	-		.73	4.54	1.45
9. Openness	.44**	.44**	.39**	.49**	.22**	.16*	.12	.21**	-	.45	5.52	1.00

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 12

Correlations and Reliability Coefficients for Study Variables 5 (20-item VEW)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	α	M	SD
1. VEW: Umwelt	-										.87	5.09	1.12
2. VEW: Mitwelt	.41.* *	-									.81	5.48	.81
3. VEW: Eigenwelt	.40**	.35**	-								.84	5.77	.86
4. VEW: Uberwelt	.51**	.36**	.37**	-							.87	5.25	1.28
5. Self Compassion Scale (SCS)	.23**	.13	.24**	.18*	-						.89	3.23	.77
6. SCS Overidentification	.05	.05	.11	.06	.83**	-					.80	2.81	1.17
7. SCS Self Kindness	.29**	.13*	.27**	.17*	.82**	.52**	-				.62	3.35	.93
8.SCS Common Humanity	.37**	.20**	.24**	.29**	.70**	.41**	.61**	-			.61	3.44	.97
9. SCS Isolation	.11	.09	.11	.09	.81**	.69**	.53*	.39**	-		.62	2.97	1.09
10. SCS Mindfulness	.25**	.06	.19	.15**	.66**	.43**	.53**	.48**	.42**	-	.59	3.79	.71

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Table 13

Rotated Factor Matrix of 20-item VEW Maximum Likelihood Extraction (Oblimin Rotation)

VEW item	Factor loading			
	1	2	3	4
Factor 1: Umwelt				
2. Think about how my body exists in space	.45	.61	.42	.25
3. Accept the fact that my body will eventually die	.39	.86	.29	.22
4. Accept that I am composed of flesh and blood	.36	.75	.27	.24
6. Come to terms with a cycle of health and illness in my human body	.31	.63	.29	.33
9. Accept mortality as a condition of life	.37	.86	.27	.30
Factor 2: Mitwelt				
9. Make choices that lead me to connect with people	.25	.31	.31	.80
12. Be part of society	.19	.28	.20	.61
13. Do things that make me feel engaged with others.	.16	.26	.14	.78
15. Enjoy my social life	.11	.12	.32	.61
16. Think about the social world I live in	.47	.45	.29	.58
Factor 3: Eigenwelt				
1. Make choices to feel at home with myself	.30	.35	.74	.23
2. Take time just for me	.19	.27	.82	.12
5. Consider my own wants and needs	.20	.29	.79	.24
9. Value my own ideas	.24	.17	.58	.42
15. Know who I am	.25	.28	.62	.35
Factor 4: Uberwelt				
10. Find importance in something larger than myself	.72	.42	.31	.23
11. Think about a spiritual or higher aspect of life	.95	.34	.19	.13
12. Seek out spiritual experiences	.89	.39	.19	.16
13. Seek wisdom	.59	.39	.36	.43
16. Explore the philosophical side of life	.56	.44	.24	.33

Note Highest Factor loadings for each item in bold

Table 14

Scree Plot of 20-item VEW Maximum Likelihood Extraction (Oblimin Rotation)

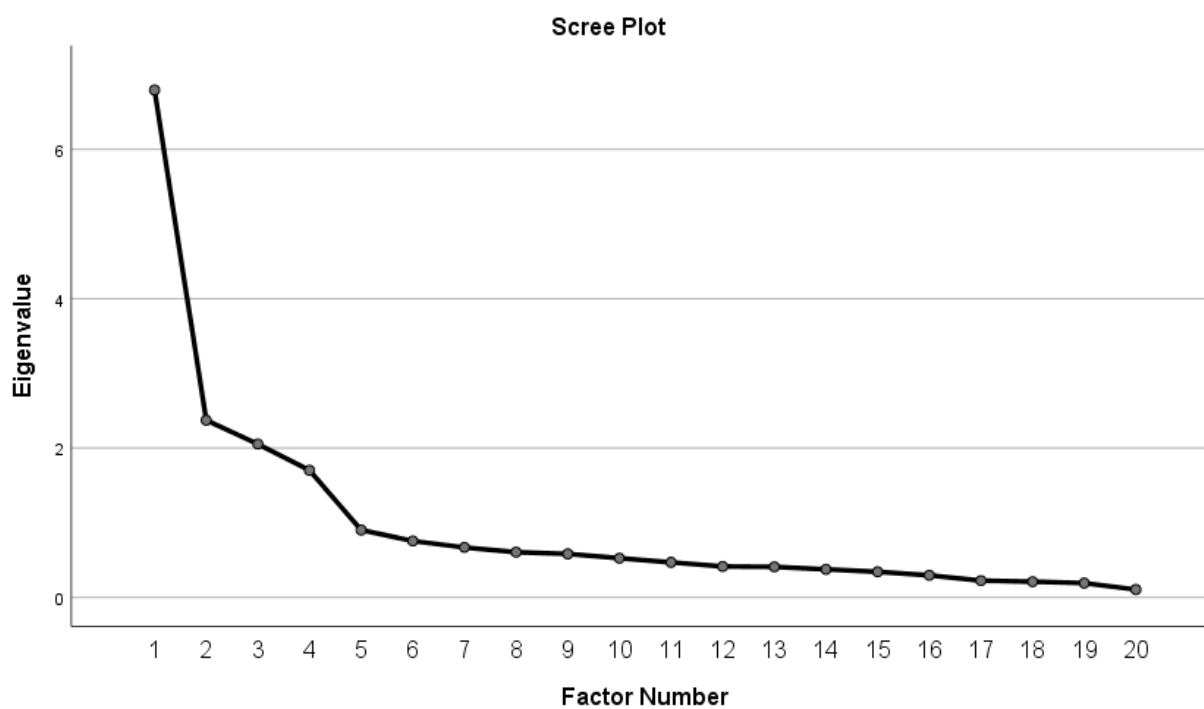


Table 15

Summary of Multiple Regression of demographic variables on the *Uberwelt* subscale

Demographic Variable	Estimate		Standard Error	t Value	Pr > |t|	95% Confidence Limits	
<i>Intercept</i>	6.682126901	B	0.39494236	16.92	<.0001	5.896740710	7.467513092
<i>Ethnicity Not White</i>	-0.256397248	B	0.21948055	-1.17	0.2460	-0.692858392	0.180063897
<i>Ethnicity White</i>	0.000000000	B	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Sexual Orientation Gay and Bi</i>	-0.038820470	B	0.27694056	-0.14	0.8889	-0.589547140	0.511906200
<i>Sexual Orientation Straight</i>	0.000000000	B	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Spiritual Beliefs Agnostic</i>	-0.068828228	B	0.31959781	-0.22	0.8300	-0.704383532	0.566727076
<i>Spiritual Beliefs Atheist</i>	-0.516387089	B	0.83967336	-0.61	0.5402	-2.186169650	1.153395472
<i>Spiritual Beliefs Christian</i>	-0.328171443	B	0.22973647	-1.43	0.1569	-0.785027606	0.128684720
<i>Spiritual Beliefs All Non-Christian</i>	-0.235043129	B	0.26778225	-0.88	0.3826	-0.767557502	0.297471244
<i>Spiritual Beliefs Nothing in Part...</i>	0.000000000	B	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Income \$10,000 - \$25,000</i>	-0.351213212	B	0.34533543	-1.02	0.3121	-1.037950592	0.335524168
<i>Income \$25,001 - \$50,000</i>	0.134046027	B	0.27814750	0.48	0.6311	-0.419080787	0.687172841
<i>Income \$50,001 - \$100,000</i>	-0.215187372	B	0.27236754	-0.79	0.4317	-0.756820101	0.326445356
<i>Income Greater than \$100,000</i>	0.167841001	B	0.29523929	0.57	0.5712	-0.419274710	0.754956711
<i>Income Less than \$10,000</i>	0.000000000	B	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Health More than Two Concerns</i>	-0.304484103	B	0.25035561	-1.22	0.2273	-0.802343681	0.193375474
<i>Health No Concerns</i>	-0.232453466	B	0.20961212	-1.11	0.2706	-0.649290148	0.184383217
<i>Health One Concern</i>	-0.283701802	B	0.23385195	-1.21	0.2285	-0.748742049	0.181338444
<i>Health Two Concerns</i>	0.000000000	B	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Gender Female</i>	-0.451204588	B	0.17010030	-2.65	0.0095	-0.789467679	-0.112941496
<i>Gender Male</i>	0.000000000	B	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Relationship Status Married</i>	0.137620990	B	0.19536533	0.70	0.4831	-0.250884399	0.526126379
<i>Relationship Status Serious Relat...</i>	0.179163245	B	0.23101029	0.78	0.4402	-0.280226057	0.638552546
<i>Relationship Status Single</i>	0.000000000	B	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Religious Practice Daily</i>	0.296660338	B	0.17489838	1.70	0.0936	-0.051144269	0.644464945
<i>Religious Practice Once a month</i>	-0.279147993	B	0.22804675	-1.22	0.2243	-0.732643955	0.174347968
<i>Religious Practice Once a week</i>	0.000000000	B	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Mental Health Practice Daily</i>	-0.313092935	B	0.20099816	-1.56	0.1231	-0.712799827	0.086613958
<i>Mental Health Practice Never</i>	-1.838323761	B	0.33518668	-5.48	<.0001	-2.504879238	-1.171768284
<i>Mental Health Practice Once/ mon</i>	-0.323042290	B	0.25619701	-1.26	0.2108	-0.832518143	0.186433563
<i>Mental Health Practice Once/ week</i>	0.000000000	B	.	.	.	.	.

Appendix A: Demographic Questions

1. What is your age?
 - 0-17
 - 18-30
 - 31-45
 - 46-60
 - 60+
2. Please Indicate your identified gender.
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary
3. Please specify your ethnicity.
 - Black
 - White
 - Native American
 - Latinx
 - Asian
 - Other
4. What is your relationship status?
 - Single
 - Married
 - Serious Relationship
5. Please indicate your Sexual orientation.
 - Straight
 - Gay
 - Bisexual/Other
6. What is your religious affiliation?
 - Christian
 - Jewish
 - Muslim
 - Buddhist
 - Hindu

- Atheist
- Agnostic
- Nothing in Particular

7. Last year, what was your income?

- Less than \$10,000
- 10,000 - \$25,000
- \$25,001 – \$50,000
- \$50,001 - \$100,000
- \$100,001 - \$150,000
- More than \$150,000

8. In general, would you describe your political views as:

- Very conservative
- Conservative
- Moderate
- Liberal
- Very Liberal

9. How often do you partake in any kind of religious or spiritual ritual (prayer, church, synagogue, mosque, meditation, other?)

- Never
- Once a year
- Once a month
- Once a week
- Daily

10. How many physical health concerns do you have?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

11. How often do you partake in any kind of activity to intentionally work on your mental health (therapy, counseling, self-care, other)

- Never
- Once a year
- Once a month
- Once a week
- Daily

Appendix B: Initial Pool of Items and Expert Review Instructions

1. Importance Placed on Existing Within the Physical World (Umwelt)

In the Value of living in the physical world (umwelt) the participant will answer on Likert-type scale how important it is to them that they think, behave, acknowledge, accept, do, and be, in certain ways that tap into existence in the physical world. The aggregate Importance of the Physical World Scale assesses how valuable (important) a person thinks it will be to exist in the world of physical and biological experiences. A person who scores high on this scale will strongly value their existence within the physical world. They will be attuned to their own physical world including bodily sensations, the weather, and nature. They will value being more accepting of their “animal nature” and to value having considered that their body is mortal.

The participant will see the following instructions and stem for the items:

Instructions to the participant: "You are being asked to rate how important it is to do a certain thing. Consider your personal values as you are completing this measure. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Please respond as honestly as you can based on what you find important. Stem: "It is important for me to:"

Stem (for expert reviewers): You (the expert reviewer) please rate these items on fidelity to the construct (how much you believe they tap directly into the theoretical construct being measured). The measure is designed for adults over 18 years old with approximately a high school education or less in an outpatient setting. Remember the construct is: **Importance Placed on Existing Within the Physical World (Umwelt)**

Qualitative Anchors:

- (a) Very Low
- (b) Low
- (c) Neutral
- (d) High
- (e) Very High

Items:

Be aware of my physical body

1. Think about how my body exists in space
2. Accept the fact that my body will eventually die
3. Understand my human instincts
4. Accept that I am composed of flesh and blood
5. Ponder the fact that my life right now depends on my body
6. Come to terms with the cycle of health and illness in my body
7. Be thoughtful about my own body
8. Think about my own biology
9. Remember that I will someday die
10. Accept mortality as a condition of life
11. Consider my place in the natural world
12. Think about how the weather outside might affect my experience
13. Do things to enjoy nature
14. Take in the world through all my senses (touch, taste, feel, sight)
15. Be intentional about the food that I eat

16. Be mindful of a pleasant experience
17. Learn about what is outside my house/apartment/wherever I live
18. Learn more about nature
19. Carefully examine a seashell
20. Learn about how people experience the physical world differently
21. Seek out pleasant physical experiences
22. Do things to enjoy the change in season
23. Make choices to care for my body
24. Be in touch with nature

2. Importance of the Social World (Mitwelt)

In the Value of Existing in the Social World, the participant will answer on a Likert-type scale how important it is to them that they think, behave, acknowledge, accept, do, and be, in certain ways that tap into existence in the social world. The aggregate Importance of the Social World Scale assesses how valuable (important) a person thinks it will be to exist in the world of interpersonal relationships, culture, and society . A person who scores high on this scale will strongly value their existence within the social world. They will value be attuned to their own and other's place within the world of people and culture.

The participant will see the following instructions and stem for the items:

Instructions to the participant: "You are being asked to rate how important it is to do a certain thing. Consider your personal values as you are completing this measure. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Please respond as honestly as you can based on what you find important." Stem: "It is important for me to:"

Stem: (for expert reviewers): You (the expert reviewer) please rate these items on fidelity to the construct (how much you believe they tap directly into the theoretical construct being measured). The measure is designed for adults over 18 years old with approximately a high school education or less in an outpatient setting. Remember the construct is: **Importance Placed on Existing Within the Social World (Mitwelt)**

Qualitative Anchors:

- (a) Very Low
- (b) Low
- (c) Neutral
- (d) High
- (e) Very High

Items:

1. Understand current culture
2. Interact with people
3. Learn about how people from other cultures live
4. Spend time around other people
5. Engage in conversation with others as much as possible
6. Learn about how other people like to be treated
7. Know my neighbors
8. Think about how culture influences me
9. Consider others' needs before making a decision
10. Make choices based on my social world

11. Accept that we live in an interconnected world
12. Encounter every person in a real way
13. Have meaningful relationships with people that are important to me
14. Consider the interconnected nature of all people in my world
15. Think about how the world is a network of people
16. Make choices that lead me to connect with people in my life
17. Learn about society
18. Have a chat with people
19. Be aware of other people's existence
20. Be part of society
21. Do things that make me feel engaged with others
22. Share my thoughts with other people
23. Enjoy my social life
24. Think about the social world I live in
25. Make choices to learn about our society

3. Importance of the Inner (Psychological) World (Eigenwelt)

In the Value of Existing in the Psychological World, the participant will answer on a Likert-type scale how important it is to them that they think, behave, acknowledge, accept, do, and be, in certain ways that tap into existence in their inner, psychological world. The aggregate Importance of the Psychological World Scale assesses how valuable (important) a person thinks it will be to exist in the world of their own thoughts, ideas, private time, and personal space . A person who scores high on this scale will strongly value their existence within their own inner world. They will value being more attuned to their self and value having a stronger sense of self.

The participant will see the following instructions and stem for the items:

Instructions to the participant: "You are being asked to rate how important it is to do a certain thing. Consider your personal values as you are completing this measure. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Please respond as honestly as you can based on what you find important." Stem: "It is important for me to:"

Stem (for expert reviewers): You (the expert reviewer) please rate these items on fidelity to the construct (how much you believe they tap directly into the theoretical construct being measured). The measure is designed for adults over 18 years old with approximately a high school education or less in an outpatient setting. Remember the construct is: **Importance Placed on Existing Within the Psychological/Inner World (Eigenwelt)**

Qualitative Anchors:

- (a) Very Low
- (b) Low
- (c) Neutral
- (d) High
- (e) Very High

Items:

1. Consider other's opinions without changing my own
2. Make choices to feel at home with myself
3. Learn about what I like and don't like
4. Carefully think about things that come into my mind

5. Take time just for me
6. Think about who I want to be
7. Acknowledge that I alone must make decisions
8. Consider my own wants and needs
9. Learn more about myself
10. Accept that my own inner world is separate from others
11. Think independently
12. Value my own ideas
13. Think about why I sometimes become anxious
14. Think about why I make choices I do
15. Be open to my own thoughts as they come
16. Learn about what causes my anxiety
17. Learn about what “makes me tick”
18. Explore my own psychology
19. Explore my own uniqueness
20. Engage in critical thinking
21. Know who I am
22. Consider how my history impacts my decisions
23. Do things that only I enjoy
24. Accept that decisions are only mine to make
25. Do things to learn more about myself

4. Importance of the Philosophical/Spiritual World (Uberwelt)

In the Value of Existing in the Meaning-Making World, the participant will answer on a Likert-type scale how important it is to them that they think, behave, acknowledge, accept, do, and be, in certain ways that tap into the more abstract world of making meaning. The aggregate Importance of the Meaning-Making World Scale assesses how valuable (important) a person thinks it will be to exist in the world of connecting to the more abstract and metaphysical ways of living – from meaningful rituals, spirituality, and making personal meaning from their life. A person who scores high on this scale will strongly value their existence within their philosophical world. They will value being attuned to aspects and concepts beyond their physical, mental, and social lives. These aspects can include beauty, truth, morality, and meaning.

The participant will see the following instructions and stem for the items:

Instructions to the participant: "You are being asked to rate how important it is to do a certain thing. Consider your personal values as you are completing this measure. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Please respond as honestly as you can based on what you find important." Stem: "It is important for me to:"

Stem (for expert reviewer): You (the expert reviewer) please rate these items on fidelity to the construct (how much you believe they tap directly into the theoretical construct being measured). The measure is designed for adults over 18 years old with approximately a high school education or less in an outpatient setting. Remember the construct is: **Importance Placed on Philosophical/Meaning Making/Spiritual World (Uberwelt)**

Qualitative Anchors:

(a) Very Low

- (b) Low
- (c) Neutral
- (d) High
- (e) Very High

Items:

1. Consider abstract concepts like truth and beauty
2. Think about what I find to be meaningful
3. Do things to explore abstract concepts like truth and beauty
4. Move toward making my life meaningful
5. Think about what is meaningful to me
6. Consume media that is substantive
7. Think carefully about what I think is right or wrong
8. Seek beauty
9. Consider my personal values
10. Learn more about my own personal values
11. Consider all possible approaches to life
12. Consider what my life means to me
13. Find importance in something larger than myself
14. Think about a spiritual or higher aspect of life
15. Learn about other belief systems
16. Go to a museum to look at interesting objects
17. Spend time with someone I think is spiritual/and or wise
18. Seek out spiritual experiences

19. Seek wisdom
20. Become educated to gain wisdom
21. Watch television and movies with a deeper message
22. Reevaluate my own morals on occasion
23. Read something that is philosophical
24. Explore the philosophical side of life

Appendix C: Final VEW Items After Expert Review

Stem: Please rate the following items on how important they are to you. Think about saying "It is important for me to..." before each item.

Qualitative anchors:

- (a) Not Important at All
- (b) Extremely not Important
- (c) Not Important
- (d) Neutral
- (e) Important
- (f) Extremely Important
- (g) Absolutely Important

Items:

Umwelt

1. Be aware of my physical body
2. Think about how my body exists in space
3. Accept the fact that my body will eventually die
4. Accept that I am composed of flesh and blood
5. Ponder the fact that my life right now depends on my body
6. Come to terms with a cycle of health and illness in my human body
7. Be thoughtful about my own body
8. Think about my own biology
9. Accept mortality as a condition of life
10. Think about how the weather outside might affect my experience

11. Take in the world through all my senses (touch, taste, feel, sight)
12. Be mindful of a pleasant experience
13. Seek out pleasant physical experiences
14. Make choices to care for my body

Mitwelt

1. Understand current culture
2. Interact with people
3. Spend time around people
4. Know my neighbors
5. Make choices based on my social world
6. Accept that we live in an interconnected world
7. Encounter every person in a real way
8. Have meaningful relationships with people that are important to me
9. Make choices that lead me to connect with people
10. Enjoy a chat with people
11. Be aware of other people's existence
12. Be part of society
13. Do things that make me feel engaged with others
14. Share my thoughts with other people
15. Enjoy my social life
16. Think about the social world I live in

Eigenwelt

1. Make choices to feel at home with myself

2. Take time just for me
3. Think about who I want to be
4. Acknowledge that I alone must make decisions
5. Consider my own wants and needs
6. Learn more about myself
7. Accept that my own inner world is separate from others
8. Think independently
9. Value my own ideas
10. Think about why I sometimes become anxious
11. Learn about what causes me anxiety
12. Learn about what “makes me tick”
13. Explore my own psychology
14. Explore my own uniqueness
15. Know who I am
16. Accept that decisions are only mine to make
17. Do things to learn more about myself

Uberwelt

1. Consider abstract concepts like truth and beauty
2. Think about what I find to be meaningful
3. Do things to explore abstract concepts like truth and beauty
4. Move toward making my life meaningful
5. Think about what is meaningful to me
6. Think carefully about what I think is right or wrong

7. Seek beauty
8. Consider my personal values
9. Consider what my life means to me
10. Find importance in something larger than myself
11. Think about a spiritual or higher aspect of life
12. Seek out spiritual experiences
13. Seek wisdom
14. Reevaluate my own morals on occasion
15. Read something that is philosophical
16. Explore the philosophical side of life

Appendix D: Instruments

The Social Desirability Scale-Seventeen (Stober, 2001)

Stem: "Please answer true or false to the following items:"

Qualitative anchors:

a) True

b) False

Items:

1. I sometimes litter.
2. I always admit my mistakes openly and face the potential negative consequences.
3. In traffic I am always polite and considerate of others.
5. I always accept others' opinions, even when they don't agree with my own.
6. I take out my bad moods on others now and then.
7. There has been an occasion when I took advantage of someone else.
8. In conversations I always listen attentively and let others finish their sentences.
9. I never hesitate to help someone in case of emergency.
10. When I have made a promise, I keep it--no ifs, ands or buts.
11. I occasionally speak badly of others behind their back.
12. I would never live off other people.
13. I always stay friendly and courteous with other people, even when I am stressed out.
14. During arguments I always stay objective and matter-of-fact.
15. There has been at least one occasion when I failed to return an item that I borrowed.
16. I always eat a healthy diet.
17. Sometimes I only help because I expect something in return.

Lumpkin's Brief Locus of Control Scale (Lumpkin, 1985)

Stem: Rate from 1 to 6 how much like you the following statements are:

Qualitative anchors:

- (a) Strongly disagree
- (b) Somewhat disagree
- (c) Neither agree or disagree
- (d) Somewhat agree
- (e) Strongly agree

1. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.
2. Getting people to do the right things depends upon ability; luck has nothing to do with it.
3. What happens to me is my own doing
4. Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck
5. Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time
6. Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me

The Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008)

Stem: Please choose how much each statement describes you.

Qualitative anchors:

- (a) Does not describe me at all
- (b) Mostly does not describe me
- (c) Somewhat does not describe me
- (d) Neutral

(e) Somewhat describes me

(f) Mostly describes me

(g) Describes me well

Items:

1. "I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular."
2. "I don't know how I really feel inside."
3. "I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others."
4. "I usually do what other people tell me to do."
5. "I always feel I need to do what others expect me to do."
6. "Other people influence me greatly."
7. "I feel as if I don't know myself very well."
8. "I always stand by what I believe in."
9. "I am true to myself in most situations."
10. "I feel out of touch with the 'real me.'"
11. "I live in accordance with my values and beliefs."
12. "I feel alienated from myself."

Spiritual Meaning Scale (Mascaro, Rosen and Morey, 2003)

Stem: Please rate how much you agree with the following statements:

Qualitative anchors:

(a) I totally agree

(b) I mostly agree

(c) Neutral

(d) I mostly agree

(e) I totally agree

Items:

1. There is no particular reason why I exist
2. We are each meant to make our own special contribution to the world
3. I was meant to actualize my potentials
4. Life is inherently meaningful
5. I will never have a spiritual bond with anyone
6. When I look deep within my heart, I see a life I am compelled to pursue
7. My life is meaningful
8. In performing certain tasks, I can feel something higher or transcendent working through me.
9. Our flawed and often horrific behavior indicates that there is little or no meaning inherent in our existence.
10. I find meaning even in my mistakes.
11. I see a special purpose for myself in this world
12. There are certain activities, jobs, or services to which I feel called
13. There is no reason or meaning underlying human existence
14. We are all participating in something larger and greater than any of us

Patient Health Questionnaire-Nine (Kroenke, & Spitzer, 2002)

Stem: Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

Qualitative anchors:

(a) Not at all

(b) Several Days

(c) More than half the days

(d) Nearly Everyday

Items:

- 1) Little interest or pleasure in doing things
- 2) Feeling down, depressed or hopeless
- 3) Trouble falling or staying asleep
- 4) Feeling tired or having no energy
- 5) Poor appetite or overeating
- 6) Feeling bad about yourself-or that you are a failure or have let you or your family down
- 7) Trouble concentrating on things such as reading the newspaper or watching television
- 8) Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or the opposite-being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual
- 9) Thoughts that you would be better off dead, or of hurting yourself

Generalized Anxiety Disorder Screener 7 (GAD 7) (Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, & Lowe, 2006)

Stem: Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

Qualitative anchors:

(a) Not at all

(b) Several days

(c) Over half the days

(d) Nearly everyday

Items:

1. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge

2. Not being able to stop or control worrying
3. Worrying too much about different things
4. Trouble relaxing
5. Being so restless that it's hard to sit still
6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable
7. Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen

The New Ecological Paradigm (Dunlap, 1978)

Stem: I Believe

Qualitative anchors:

- (a) Strongly disagree
- (b) Disagree
- (c) Neither agree nor disagree
- (d) Agree
- (e) Strongly agree

Items:

- 1) We are approaching the limit of the number of people the Earth can support.
- 2) Humans have the right to modify the natural environment to suit their needs
- 3) When humans interfere with nature, it often produces disastrous consequences
- 4) Human ingenuity will ensure that we do not make the Earth unlivable
- 5) Humans are seriously abusing the environment
- 6) The Earth has plenty of natural resources if we just learn to develop them
- 7) Plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist

- 8) The balance of nature is strong enough to cope with the impact of modern industrial nations
- 9) Despite our special abilities, humans are still subject to the laws of nature
- 10) The so-called “ecological crisis” facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated.
- 11) The Earth is like a spaceship with very limited room and resources
- 12) Humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature.
- 13) The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset.
- 14) Humans will eventually learn enough about how nature works to be able to control it
- 15) If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe.

The Purpose in Life Short Form (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1969)

Stem: Please rate the following questions on a scale of 1 to 7:

Item:

- 1) In life I have:

Qualitative anchor:

- (a) No aims or goals
- (b) Clear goals and aims

- 2) My personal existence is

Qualitative anchor:

- (a) Utterly meaningless, without purpose
- (b) Purposeful and meaningful

- 3) In achieving life goals, I've

Qualitative anchor:

- (a) Made no progress whatsoever

(b) Progressed to complete fulfillment

4) I have discovered:

Qualitative anchor:

(a) No mission or purpose in life

(b) A satisfying life purpose

Social Well-Being Scale (Social Integration Subscale) (Keys, 1998)

Stem: Please choose how much you agree with the following statements:

Qualitative anchors:

(a) Strongly Disagree

(b) Disagree

(c) Somewhat Disagree

(d) Neither Disagree nor Agree

(e) Somewhat Agree

(f) Agree

(g) Strongly Agree

Items:

1. You don't feel you belong to anything you'd call a community.
2. You feel like you're an important part of your community.
3. If you had something to say, you believe people in your community would listen to you.
4. You feel close to other people in your community.
5. You see your community as a source of comfort.
6. If you had something to say, you don't think your community would take you seriously.
7. You believe other people in society value you as a person.

8. I don't feel I belong to anything I'd call a community.
9. I feel close to other people in my community.
10. My community is a source of comfort.

A Brief Measure of the Big Five Personality Traits (Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann, 2003)

Stem: I see myself as:

Qualitative anchors:

- (a) Strongly Agree
- (b) Disagree
- (c) Somewhat disagree
- (d) Neither agree nor disagree
- (e) Somewhat agree
- (f) Agree
- (g) Strongly Agree

Items:

1. Extraverted, enthusiastic.
2. Critical, quarrelsome.
3. Dependable, self-disciplined.
4. Anxious, easily upset.
5. Open to new experiences, complex.
6. Reserved, quiet.
7. Sympathetic, warm.
8. Disorganized, careless.

- 9. Calm, emotionally stable.
- 10. Conventional, uncreative.

The Self Compassion Scale Short Form (Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011)

Stem: How I typically Act Toward Myself in Difficult Times:

Qualitative anchors (5 frequency options):

- (a) Almost never
- (b) Almost Always

Items:

- 1. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
- 2. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.
- 3. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.
- 4. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.
- 5. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.
- 6. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
- 7. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.
- 8. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure
- 9. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.
- 10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.
- 11. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
- 12. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

The Seeking of Noetic Goals (Crumbaugh, 1977)

Stem: Please rate how frequently you believe the following to be true:

Qualitative anchors:

- (a) Never
- (b) Sometimes
- (c) About half the time
- (d) Most of the time
- (e) Constantly

Items:

- 1) I am restless
- 2) I feel myself in need of a new lease on life
- 3) I think about the ultimate meaning in life
- 4) Over my lifetime, I have felt a strong urge to find myself
- 5) I seem to change my main objective in life
- 6) I sensed a lack of worthwhile job to do in life
- 7) I feel the lack of and a need to find a real meaning
- 8) I feel that some element which I can't quite define is missing from my life
- 9) I daydream about finding a new life and new identity
- 10) On occasion I have thought that I had found what I was looking for in life, only to have it
vanish later
- 11) I feel the need for adventure and new worlds to conquer
- 12) Before I achieve one goal, I start towards a different one
- 13) I have felt a determination to achieve something far beyond the ordinary

- 14) The mystery of life puzzles and disturbs me
- 15) I hope for something exciting in the future
- 16) I feel that the greatest fulfillment of my life lies in my future
- 17) On occasion I have thought that I found what I was looking for
- 18) I try new activities and then these soon lose their attractiveness
- 19) I think of achieving something new and different
- 20) I seem to change my main objective in life

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