INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDIES AND HYPOTHESES

This chapter will briefly introduce the studies and its hypotheses. In Chapter 3 a preliminary study of the psychometric properties of the Life Regard Index (LRI) in a sample of psychology students is described. Since no reliability and validity data other than those reported by Battista and Almond in 1973 were available, this study investigates whether the reliability and validity estimates of the Dutch version of the LRI are satisfactory.

Chapter 4 is the account of an extensive study of the psychometric properties of the LRI in three independent samples, two consisting of normal and one of distressed subjects. To further investigate the associations of the LRI with sex, age, and level of education one sample is drawn from the general population. The study aims to establish the stability and internal reliabilities of the LRI and its subscales Framework and Fulfilment. By means of confirmative factor analyses both for the separate samples (PEKON, ten Berge, 1986) and for the three samples simultaneously (SCA, Kiers & ten Berge, 1989) the factorial validity of the LRI is assessed. The discriminant construct validity of the LRI is studied by testing its ability to discriminate distressed from normal subjects. Additionally, the stability and internal consistency estimates for the translated version of the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) are investigated. Finally, the postulated value-independence of the LRI is tested.

The conclusion from the psychometric studies is that the psychometric properties of the translated version of the LRI are more than satisfactory and that the reliability estimates for the RVS are within acceptable limits. Thereupon, using a revised and adopted version of the LRI as the criterion measure, two studies into the clinical aspects of values and meaning in life and two ad
ditional studies of the phenomenological aspects of meaning in life are conducted.

Chapter 5 describes an investigation of the structure of human values. Using a principal components analysis the 36 separate values of the Rokeach Values Survey were distributed to a limited number of value scales which were employed in the study into the effects of values on the process and outcome of psychotherapy, as described in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6 is an account of a study which addresses the issue raised by existential therapists (e.g., Frankl, 1976; Yalom, 1980) that meaning in life is a neglected issue in regular psychotherapeutic practice. The hypothesis is tested that the variable of meaning in life plays a crucial role in the outcome of regular psychotherapy. The abilities of the meaning in life dimensions Framework and Fulfilment to predict general and psychological well-being in distressed young adults are examined in both cross-sectional and longitudinal data.

Chapter 7 describes an investigation of the impact of values on psychotherapy outcome in a sample of distressed young adults. To conduct this study a multi-item value measure is first developed by means of a principal components analysis of the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS, Rokeach, 1973). This study elaborates on findings from recent research (e.g., Arizmendi, Beutler, Shanfield, Crago, & Hagaman, 1985; Kelly & Strupp, 1992) that initial client/therapist value dissimilarity and client/therapist value convergence (the increasing value similarity of client’s values with therapist’s values in the course of therapy) are related to treatment outcome. The hypotheses are tested that these value phenomena affect the outcome of short-term psychotherapy which is assessed by means of measures for positive well-being (self-esteem), negative well-being (symptom relief) and long-term well-being (meaning in life).

Chapter 8 and 9 are accounts of studies of the phenomenological aspects of meaning in life. The study which is described in chapter 8 combines qualitative and quantitative research approaches to investigate the nature of subjects’ answers to two questions about experiences of meaningfulness and meaninglessness in subjects’ personal lives. The study further aims to relate the subjects’ answers to their LRI scores. Evidence of construct validity for the LRI is searched by testing the hypothesis that effective coping with life crises in the past is related to current degree of meaning in life.

Chapter 9 reports a study of the various sources from which normal young adults and patients derive a sense of meaning in life. The hypothesis is tested that patients have lower levels of meaning in life and are less committed to their
personal meanings than normal persons. In addition, the relativistic theory of Battista and Almond (1973) is evaluated by testing the hypothesis that degree of commitment to the source of meaning is more crucial to degree of meaning in life, as assessed with the LRI, than the type of source of meaning.

Finally, chapter 10 contains a discussion of the results of the psychometric, clinical and phenomenological studies and concluding remarks concerning the current research’s implications for clinical practice and suggestions for future research.