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of arts, sciences and technologies



Eurotas Official Journal



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INTEGRAL TRANSPERSONAL JOURNAL
VOLUME IV, NUMBER IV, 2013

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Editorial

Can the Transpersonal be researched? Can Research be Transpersonal

STEVEN SCHMITZ, Ph.D.

Can the transpersonal be researched? Can research be transpersonal?

Two of my colleagues from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (now Sofia University, USA), Rosemarie Anderson and William Braud, made a significant change in the transpersonal field in 1998 and provided answers to the above questions. They published the book titled, *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences: Honoring Human Experience*.

William Braud and Rosemarie Anderson introduce a series of transpersonal research methods that are intended to help researchers develop new ways of knowing and methods of inquiry. While these methods will be of particular interest to researchers in transpersonal psychology, humanistic psychology, or transpersonal studies applied to traditional fields, the authors argue that these approaches - with their emphasis on developing intuition, empathy and self-awareness – can benefit anyone involved in the research enterprise. (From the book's back cover).

In their second book (2011) they present how the research process can be a transformative experience for the researcher, the participants, and the recipients of the results.

When I first became involved with the transpersonal field it was still in its infancy. Its birthing produced excitement for psychologists who had transcendent and mystical experiences, those who found the spiritual aspects of their own human nature to be valuable and important to their everyday living. Previous forms of psychology had all made significant contributions to the study of human nature, development, and healing, yet some psychologists thought these fields had not gone far enough. The aspects of consciousness, and spiritual and mystical experiences that have been recorded throughout human history also needed to be researched and applied to psychology and psychotherapy. Transpersonal Psychology was developed to meet this recognized gap.

For several years the argument was that the transpersonal and the spiritual were ineffable. The conversation was that it was difficult to define this field or that it was beyond definition. Personally, I found this argument puzzling. How can someone be a part of a field, study it, and practice it, without being able to define it? An article was published by the *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, by Hartelius, Caplin, & Rardin, (2007), that addressed this issue of definition. It provides information about the transpersonal field as *content* of a beyond-ego psychology, as *context* for integrative psychology of the whole person, and as *catalyst* for human transformation (p. 10).

Another argument against the transpersonal field is that it lacks a body of legitimate research. In two recent Transpersonal Conferences, the 2010 ITA (International Transpersonal Association) Conference in Moscow and the 2012 ATP/ITP (Association for Transpersonal Psychology and Institute of Transpersonal Psychology) Conference in California, there was an emphasis on the amount of research

that has been done in the field. The *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* has an archive of over 40 years of published research in the transpersonal field. There are other transpersonal journals that also publish research, such as the *Integral Transpersonal Journal*, the *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, and the *Journal of Transpersonal Research*.

Recognizing the value of transpersonal research and the need to make it more known, two EUROTAS members conceived the idea of the EDTR (EUROTAS Division of Transpersonal Research). The two women who conceived this new department at the 2012 EUROTAS Conference in Latvia are Giovanna Calabrese (Italy) and Regina Hess (Germany/UK/USA). They were joined by two other EUROTAS members, Lindy McMullin (Greece) and Rona Newmark (South Africa). They brought this proposal to the attention of the EUROTAS Board of Directors at the board meeting in Barcelona earlier this year. The Board unanimously approved this proposal. The Board members also recognize the importance of transpersonal research.

This new division helps to fulfill the vision of EUROTAS as an institution for the development, teaching, and application of the theories, research, and practice of Transpersonal Psychology and Psychotherapy. The EDTR mission is "to promote and expand the body of knowledge, and to advance the state of the art of research in the field of Transpersonal Psychology, Psychotherapy, and alternative healing practices... It is important that we are able to share our transpersonal views, increase people's awareness of spirituality and the promotion of higher levels of consciousness, provide expert support for the development of Transpersonal Psychology in European countries and overseas, and develop professional and academic networks globally." (from the EUROTAS website)

Some of the services that will be provided by this division are

1. Provide knowledge through seminars and workshops about transpersonal research and methodologies to students and researchers in the transpersonal field and other related disciplines
2. Provide expert advice and support for current research proposals and projects, curriculum development, and outreach for transpersonal communities
3. Compile and share the noteworthy research findings that already have been found in the field
4. Form research delegations to international conferences to expand a visible presence for EUROTAS

This new research division will be introduced at this year's 2013 EUROTAS Conference in Moldova in September (www.eurotas2013.com).

EUROTAS is interested in supporting transpersonal research and making a contribution to the world. Though transpersonal research is not the panacea that will save our world, I believe the research can continue to make a significant contribution to positive change needed by our world.

Note:

Please send any responses to this editorial to Steven Schmitz, Ph.D. at transpersonal_light@yahoo.com.

Steven Schmitz is Transpersonal Counselor, Shamanic Practitioner, Adjunct Professor, International Speaker and Workshop Leader, Board Member of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology (USA) and the International Q'ero Foundation (Peru).