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Applying Quantitative Research Methods in Transpersonal Psychology: Introduction to Special Topic Section

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Applying Quantitative Research Methods in Transpersonal Psychology: Introduction to Special Topic Section

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Compared to other fields of psychology, transpersonal psychology has produced relatively little quantitative empirical research (Friedman, 2002). Friedman has argued that this is at least partially due to transpersonal theorists “frequently portraying science as inadequate for and irrelevant to addressing transpersonal concerns” (Friedman, 2005, p. 3), while Friedman with MacDonald (e.g., Friedman & MacDonald, 2002; MacDonald & Friedman, 2002) emphasized the importance of including quantitative approaches in studying transpersonal psychology, especially in the value of using psychometric approaches to build cumulative transpersonal knowledge. Taylor (1992), on the other hand, suggested that transpersonal psychology’s emphasis on qualitative approaches counterbalances the prevailing overemphasis on quantitative approaches within other areas of psychology, while Braud and Anderson (1998) suggested that “in-depth [i.e., qualitative and other innovative] approaches tend to better suit the idiographic and personal nature of transpersonal experiences” (1998, p. x).

As the *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*’ name signifies, this journal focuses on transpersonal studies, a much broader term that is inclusive of many transpersonal disciplines in addition to transpersonal psychology. We believe that transpersonal psychology, as part of transpersonal studies, can only move beyond its current isolated and limited position within contemporary psychology by actively using recognized scientific methods, both quantitative and qualitative as well as others. In this regard, we agree that “a redirection back to science

would both allow transpersonal psychology to gain acceptance as a legitimate enterprise within the larger community of scientific efforts, including the discipline of psychology, and allow for its responsible application toward human betterment” (Friedman, 2002, p. 185). However, we think that scientific approaches to transpersonal psychology should not be limited to any singular method, including qualitative or quantitative, and we also think this applies to other areas of transpersonal studies. Our position supporting the inclusion of quantitative methods within transpersonal psychology in no way detracts from our view of the equal importance of including qualitative and other innovative approaches, such as mixed-methods, in scientific inquiry in this area, nor should it abnegate the equal importance of using a full-range of research approaches to other areas of transpersonal studies, such as artistic and poetic explorations.

But, to begin to rectify the lack of many quantitative empirical papers in transpersonal psychology, we are very pleased to publish two very strong quantitative research studies, which together comprise this issue’s special topics section. Teresa L. DeCicco and Mirella L. Stroink’s “A Third Model of Self-Conceptualization: The Metapersonal Self” extends previous work on self-construal theory in a series of well-constructed and well-conducted psychometric studies of what they call “metapersonal self-construal.” Metapersonal self-construal is conceptualized as a transpersonal construct differing from both independent and interdependent self-construals, widely held mainstream psychological views that ignore a transpersonal perspective.

Though similar approaches have been pursued by others (e.g., Friedman, 1983; Pappas & Friedman, 2007), their research provides additional evidence that conventional models are incomplete without such transpersonal perspectives. Sharon G. Solloway and William P. Fisher, Jr.'s "Mindfulness in Measurement: Reconsidering the Measurable in Mindfulness Practice" also employs a psychometric approach, based on both qualitative and quantitative data, to measure the effects of mindfulness practice. Their data also provides convincing evidence of the worth of these transpersonal practices, as well as the value and applicability of quantitative approaches within transpersonal psychology.

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