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## Editors' Introduction

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## Editors' Introduction

The *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* (*IJTS*) has a three-fold mission: to build and enrich the literature of transpersonal psychology and related fields, to encourage the publication of empirical research in these fields, and to expand transpersonal studies by cultivating the use of a transpersonal approach to other areas of scholarship. The current issue advances all three of these goals.

Early in the transpersonal field's history it was recognized that other disciplines of study contributed to transpersonal psychology (Boucouvalas, 1980). Later it became clear that transpersonal approaches might also develop in non-psychology areas such as sociology, education, anthropology (Walsh, 1993), medicine (Achterberg, 1992), and business (Schott, 1992). Some fields not carrying the transpersonal name have also been seen as closely related, such as ecopsychology (Davis, 1998) and somatics (Walsh, 1993). These disciplines arguably belong under the umbrella of transpersonal studies, to which this journal is devoted.

In addition to cultivating transpersonal disciplines, *IJTS* also supports the development of transpersonal approaches within fields with which there are significant points of overlap. Contemporary feminism is one of these fields, and the Special Topic in this issue offers papers that explore a transpersonal approach to feminist thought and research. These are previewed by Special Topic editors Christine Brooks and Courtenay Crouch in the editorial introduction to that section. In this way, a major portion of the issue is devoted to pursuing the third of the journal's goals.

The second goal, promotion of empirical work in transpersonal psychology, is furthered by one of the two general articles also presented here: a phenomenological study by Anette Kjellgren and Anders Eriksson on altered

states experienced during shamanic-like drumming. The result is a clear description of the experience of shamanic-like journeying, richly studded with the personal language of the participants. While shamanic experiences have been of great interest to transpersonal psychologists, this study is one of a small number that investigate the processes associated with shamanic journeying in a systematic way.

The importance of empirical work within transpersonal studies cannot be overemphasized. Transpersonal fields are rich with theory and philosophy, and while there is some evidence that the trend is toward more research within transpersonal psychology (G. Rothe, personal communication, June 6, 2011), there is much low-hanging fruit in terms of opportunities to test transpersonal ideas empirically. For this reason, *IJTS* gives precedence to empirical submissions.

A second paper, by Candace Best, offers a lifespan development model based on the traditional Indian chakra system. In this view, the fetal stage and approximately the first 16 months after birth correspond to the root chakra, which sits at the base of the spine. This chakra is associated with the rudimentary processes of existence. From here the average individual passes through stages associated with another three of the seven chakras: the sacral, navel, and heart chakras. The heart chakra corresponds to the stages of middle adulthood through old age. For individuals with exceptional spiritual development, the throat, brow, and crown chakras may also open, bringing with them higher human capacities. This paper represents an area not yet well developed within transpersonal psychology, and thus particularly noteworthy.

Additionally, the issue contains a response by John Abramson to the extensive work of Elias Capriles

presented in Volume 28(2) of this journal. Capriles' paper offered a detailed critique of three major transpersonal theorists—Wilber, Grof, and Washburn—from the perspective of Dzogchen Buddhism. Abramson's comments acknowledged much of Capriles' critiques of Wilber, but offered several correctives, mainly along the line that Capriles' work did not take into consideration Wilber's most recent theoretical advances. This is a familiar theme in such rebuttals of Wilber's critics, due in part to the fact that Wilber shifts his views frequently (MacDonald, 2007). In this case the point is accurate, as Capriles was re-stating critiques written some years prior (also published in *IJTS*; see Capriles, 2000); Wilber's work was not the major focus of this paper. Abramson's points of correction are thus fair-minded and specific, and a helpful clarification.

*IJTS* is committed to advancing dialogue and scholarship within transpersonal studies, and the volunteer staff that helps to produce the journal is growing in both size and skill. Without them, the many authors who have shared the fruits of their work, and the reviewers who have helped to strengthen those efforts, the journal's contributions would be impossible. My sincere thanks to each and every one.

*Glenn Hartelius, Editor*

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