



9-1-2017

Introduction to the Special Topic Section on Transpersonal Measures of Spirituality

Gabriel S. Crane


California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA, USA

Glenn Hartelius

California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA, USA

Glenn Hartelius

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/ijts-transpersonalstudies>

 Part of the [Philosophy Commons](#), [Quantitative Psychology Commons](#), [Religion Commons](#), and the [Transpersonal Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Crane, G. S., Hartelius, G., & Hartelius, G. (2017). Introduction to the special topic section on transpersonal measures of spirituality. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 36 (1). <http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24972/ijts.2017.36.1.98>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

This Special Topic Introduction is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals and Newsletters at Digital Commons @ CIIS. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Journal of Transpersonal Studies by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CIIS. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@ciis.edu.

Introduction to the Special Topic Section on Transpersonal Measures of Spirituality

Abraham Maslow, the most prominent founder of transpersonal psychology, reached for new ways forward that were within the domain of scientific study. Maslow was himself an experimental psychologist who spent years researching primate behavior and motivation prior to his work in psychology. While he criticized ways in which certain assumptions appeared to artificially limit psychology, he was in no way opposed to the use of science. For example, Maslow (1968) criticized psychology for focusing mainly on pathology to the exclusion of human potential. He suggested that objectivity did not necessarily require an attitude of complete detachment, and that a certain intimacy between the investigator and his or her subject might actually produce enhanced objectivity (Maslow, 1970). Maslow (1969) also argued that behaviorism was inappropriately modeled on physical sciences, and that psychoanalysis considered only those things that the person has in common with animals, rather than what might be uniquely human. While it has been correctly noted that Maslow expressed musings about mysticism and religion that seem to have a perennialist flavor (Taylor, 2016), none of his concerns argued against the pursuit of scientific work in areas of interest to transpersonal scholarship.

To the contrary, Maslow (1970) observed that the common association of spirituality with religion was problematic “for the writer who is intent on demonstrating that the common base for all religions is human, natural, empirical, and that the so-called spiritual values are also naturally derivable” (p. 4). He noted that he had available “only a theistic language for this ‘scientific’ job” (p. 4). When Maslow (1970) suggested that, “all religions are the same in their essence and always have been the same” (p. 20), it would seem that he conceived of this essence in naturalistic and empirical terms amenable to scientific study rather than as something pertaining to the domain of esoterics or metaphysics.

The scholar carrying forward this strand of the field most vocally has arguably been Harris Friedman

(2002, 2015), who has consistently pressed for the development of transpersonal psychology as a scientific field. Friedman has made a case roughly similar to Maslow’s, arguing that transpersonal should navigate between the twin extremes of ideological science—what he has called scientism—and naïve belief in abstract concepts for which there is no empirical evidence of any kind, which he labeled as romanticism.

Friedman’s work has done much to support quantitative assessment within the field, a crucial component for advancing empirical work related to transpersonal constructs. Given that many founders of the field came out of humanistic psychology, which advocated for the role of lived human experience, it is fitting that the core literature of transpersonal psychology reflects an appreciation of qualitative research. At the same time, scale development is a somewhat natural extension of qualitative research. With a psychometric scale, it becomes possible to learn how frequently certain aspects of lived experience are found in a community or group of individuals—for example, facets of experience associated with constructs such as spirituality, mindfulness, empathy, or compassion.

Friedman’s (1983) Self-Expansiveness Level Form represented the first effort to measure a transpersonal construct. Together with Douglas MacDonald (1997, 2000, 2009), who developed the Expressions of Spirituality Inventory (ESI) based on exploratory factor analyses on a variety of instruments, Friedman has supported the assessment of humanistic, transpersonal, and spiritual constructs (e.g., Friedman & MacDonald, 1997, 2002; MacDonald & Friedman, 2002, 2013; MacDonald, Kuentzel, & Friedman, 1999a, 1999b; MacDonald, LeClair, Holland, Alter, & Friedman, 1995).

MacDonald, Friedman, and other colleagues have recently published a validity study on the Expressions of Spirituality Inventory – Revised (ESI-R; MacDonald et al., 2015), which has been translated and validated in German. Three further studies validating the

ESI-R in Czech, Spanish, and Peruvian contexts, appear in this issue. The ESI-R represents what is likely the most comprehensive and sophisticated effort to measure the construct of spirituality cross-culturally, and as results are obtained from a variety of cultural contexts will surely provide a much more reliable understanding than anything currently in the literature.

The definition offered by MacDonald et al. (2015) suggests that spirituality is:

a natural aspect of human functioning which relates to a special class of non-ordinary experiences and the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that cause, co-occur, and/or result from such experiences. The experiences themselves are characterized as involving states and modes of consciousness which alter the functions and expressions of self and personality and impact the way in which we perceive and understand ourselves, others, and reality as a whole. (n.p.)

This definition provides what Maslow (1970) complained that he did not have: language that is compatible with naturalistic science, yet “does not completely deny the utilization of such ideas and systems of thought as hermeneutic tools for the interpretation of spiritual phenomena” (MacDonald et al., 2015). Its inclusion of non-ordinary states of consciousness and its applicability to cross-cultural contexts make this a definition that reflects transpersonal perspectives in a way that can effectively inform the broader academic study of spirituality. As such, the ESI-R and the associated research is likely one of the more important developments related to transpersonal psychology of the past several decades.

Gabriel Crane, Special Topic Editor
California Institute of Integral Studies

Glenn Hartelius, Main Editor
California Institute of Integral Studies

References

- Friedman, H. L. (1983). The Self-Expansiveness Level Form: A conceptualization and measurement of a transpersonal construct. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 15*(1), 37–50.
- Friedman, H. L. (2002). Transpersonal psychology as a scientific field. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies, 21*(1), 175–187.
- Friedman, H. L. (2015). Further developing transpersonal psychology as a science: Building and testing middle-range transpersonal theories. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies, 34*(1–2), 55–64.
- Friedman, H. L., & MacDonald, D. A. (1997). Toward a working definition of transpersonal assessment. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 29*(2), 105.
- Friedman, H., & MacDonald, D. A. (2002). Using transpersonal tests in humanistic psychological assessment. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 30*(3), 223–236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08873267.2002.9977037>
- MacDonald, D. A. (1997). The development of a comprehensive factor analytically derived measure of spirituality and its relationship to psychological functioning. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, Canada.
- MacDonald, D. A. (2000). Spirituality: Description, measurement, and relation to the five factor model of personality. *Journal of Personality, 68*(1), 153–197. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6494.t01-1-00094>
- MacDonald, D. A. (2009). Identity and spirituality: Conventional and transpersonal perspectives. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies, 28*(1), 86–106.
- MacDonald, D. A., & Friedman, H. L. (2002). Assessment of humanistic, transpersonal, and spiritual constructs: State of the science. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 42*(3), 102–125. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002216702237126>
- MacDonald, D. A., & Friedman, H. L. (2013). Quantitative assessment of transpersonal and spiritual constructs. *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of transpersonal psychology* (pp. 281–299). Malden, MA: Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118591277.ch15>
- MacDonald, D. A., Friedman, H. L., Brewczynski, J., Holland, D., Salagame, K. K. K., Mohan, K. K., ... & Cheong, H. W. (2015). Spirituality as a scientific construct: testing its universality across cultures and languages. *PloS One, 10*(3), e0117701. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0117701>
- MacDonald, D. A., Kuentzel, J. G., & Friedman, H. L. (1999a). A survey of measures of spiritual and transpersonal constructs: Part one—Research update. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 31*(2), 137–154.

- MacDonald, D. A., Kuentzel, J. G., & Friedman, H. L. (1999b). A survey of measures of spiritual and transpersonal constructs: Part two-additional instruments. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 31*(2), 155–177.
- MacDonald, D. A., LeClair, L., Holland, C. J., Alter, A., & Friedman, H. L. (1995). A survey of measures of transpersonal constructs. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 27*(2), 171–235.
- Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Maslow, A. H. (1969). The farther reaches of human nature. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 1*(1), 1–9.
- Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Religions, values, and peak experiences* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: Viking.
- Taylor, S. (2016). From philosophy to phenomenology: The argument for a “soft” perennialism. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies, 35*(2), 17–41.

About the Author

Gabriel S. Crane, MA, is a writer, qigong teacher, mentor and rites of passage guide living in Berkeley, CA. He is a Master’s student in the East-West Psychology department at the California Institute of Integral Studies (c’ 17), where his research interests include the mind-body connection, eco-psychology, and the entheogenic experience. In addition, he is trained as a Yuan Ming Medicine Therapist in the lineage of Ren Xue, a holistic approach to life development rooted in traditional Chinese wisdom culture. He has lived and studied Hebrew mysticism in Jerusalem, worked for a healing retreat center in Peru, and paddled a canoe down the Mississippi River. His work can be found at www.wovenwings.net.

Glenn Hartelius, PhD, is Founding Director of an online PhD program in Integral and Transpersonal Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in San Francisco, CA, where he serves as Associate Professor. He serves as main editor for the *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, coeditor of *The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Transpersonal Psychology*, and Secretary of the International Transpersonal Association. His research on the definition and scope of transpersonal psychology has helped to define the field. His work in attention and somatic phenomenology strives to make states of consciousness measurable. He also maintains an executive coaching practice.

About the Journal

The *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* is a peer-reviewed academic journal in print since 1981. It is sponsored by the California Institute of Integral Studies, published by Floraglates Foundation, and serves as the official publication of the International Transpersonal Association. The journal is available online at www.transpersonalstudies.org, and in print through www.lulu.com (search for IJTS).