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Dragons, Spheres, and Flashlights: Appropriate Research
Approaches for Studying Workplace Spirituality

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Abstract

Transpersonal psychology studies experiences in which one's sense of identity; stage of development; state of consciousness; and ways of knowing, being, and doing can be expanded beyond those typically considered in conventional psychology. It addresses issues of spirituality, ego-transcendence, wisdom, psychospiritual growth and development, personal and societal transformation, and wholeness. Its new forms of transpersonal inquiry similarly expand research praxis by extending the types of topics and questions that may be explored; the ways data can be collected, treated, and reported; the disciplines, time-frames, and experiences that can inform the research project; and the ways the investigator's own personal and spiritual nature and processes can enhance research. This article addresses ways in which transpersonal inquiry can supplement more established quantitative and qualitative research approaches in exploring workplace spirituality by including spiritually related practices of the researcher in the research enterprise and by its greater emphasis on values and transformation.

Keywords: transpersonal, workplace, spirituality, transformation, research methods

Dragons, Spheres, and Flashlights: Appropriate Research

Approaches for Studying Workplace Spirituality

In this invited paper, I discuss ways in which both the content (theory and research findings) and, especially, the research methods and approaches of the growing field of transpersonal psychology might be applied to the study of workplace spirituality. The paper addresses issues of spirituality and spiritual intelligence (in general and in a business context), and how quantitative, qualitative, and the newer transpersonal inquiry approaches might be used most appropriately to increase our understanding of spirituality in the workplace. I make suggestions about specific research questions that might be asked about workplace spirituality, and address the possibilities of transformative change in all persons involved in such research projects.

Three metaphors inform this article. Each provides a helpful lesson for choosing a research approach optimally suited for the study of spiritual topics—not only in the workplace, but in other contexts as well.

Three Metaphors

The first metaphor is an image: the Ouroboros. This ancient image, perhaps best known for its associations with gnosticism and alchemy, depicts a dragon or serpent in circular aspect, devouring its own tail. The Ouroboros (literally, *tail-devourer*) has been understood as a symbol for cyclicity, reflexivity (self-referencing), unity, wholeness, infinity, and integration and assimilation of the opposite. Ouroboros suggests a vital, self-eating, circular being.

One meaning that I have personally projected upon Ouroboros is that of *same devouring or destroying same*. An example of this self-limiting meaning, in the context of scientific inquiry, is how certain methods and concepts of science have been used to eventually indicate both the limits of those methods and concepts and the need for a new and more inclusive

paradigm. A well-appreciated case is that in which the methods and findings of Newtonian science revealed their own limitations and led to the alternative relativistic and quantum mechanical models. A much less appreciated case—recognized by far fewer and still controversial to many—is how scientific methods were used by workers in the discipline of experimental parapsychology to demonstrate the limitations of the current scientific paradigm and to question the universal applicability of constructs such as the possibility of only local influences, conventional views of causality, and the limitation of vehicles of knowing to the conventional senses and rational inference.

Another meaning of Ouroboros, and the one that I will explore in this article, is that of *turning a process on itself* to examine itself, its own nature, and its assumptions. A process—be it a science, disciplined inquiry, or any other approach—can turn on itself not only to consume itself (as suggested above), but also to *illuminate* itself. Here, I will suggest that spiritual processes in the workplace can best be studied through the use of *spiritual processes themselves*, as these are embodied in the *transpersonal inquiry* research approaches I will discuss. This meaning is suggestive of the claim that a new way of knowing—an *eye of the spirit*—may be necessary for accessing qualities that might remain inaccessible through other, more conventional means (i.e., through the *eye of the senses* and the *eye of the mind*, of rational thought). The reflexive, self-illuminating (like illuminating like) aspects of this metaphor share similarities with homeopathic principles (like curing like) and with resonance principles (like responding to like).

The mention of circularity segues nicely to the second metaphor: the circle. This, too, has a meaning of completeness and wholeness. However, I mention the circle as an informing metaphor because of its relevance to 360-degree feedback in assessment and performance evaluation. The “full circle” idea here, of course, is to gain evaluative information from as many different sources as possible. Note, however, that 360 degrees continues to refer to a circle, a

figure that continues to lie on a 2-dimensional plane. What is off of that plane remains untouched, unheeded. A more complete appreciation would be afforded by a 3-dimensional sphere, rather than a two-dimensional (flatland) circle. The suggestion, for this article, is that additional dimensions, that is, additional modes of knowing, are necessary if one is to appreciate what might lie above, below, or beyond the usual, familiar plane. A spiritual form of inquiry would seem necessary in order to explore what might lie in the spiritual domain, beyond the ordinary.

The third metaphor is really a caveat. It is the well-known Sufi teaching story of searching for a lost object not in the dark area where it was lost but in another area that has more light. The latter is easy; the former is much more challenging. When I tell this story, I always include my own addendum. Perhaps, in searching in the light, one might find enough parts to construct a flashlight. With this new tool, one then can explore the dark area and have a much better chance of finding what one is seeking. However, there is a temptation to be seduced by the many wonderful things one can see in the lighted area and to forget about the importance of constructing the flashlight that will allow us to more effectively carry out our quest. We might even forget what we originally were seeking and forget where it might really be hiding.

The caveat: In researching spirituality, it may be tempting to use familiar, well-recognized and accepted methods. In doing so, however, we may look in the wrong places, forget the true objects of our quest, and emerge from our endeavor with something that is, at best, trivial or dubious.

The relevance of these three metaphors to the study of workplace spirituality will become clearer as this article unfolds.

Spirituality and Spiritual Intelligence

Spirituality is notoriously difficult to define. Indeed, Smith (2001) recently lamented the invention and use of that very term:

It is a bad sign when *spiritual*, an adjective, gets turned into a noun, *spirituality*, for this has a dog chasing its own tail. Grammatically, *spirit* is the noun in question, and *spiritual* its adjective. *Spirituality* is a neologism that has come into existence because *spirit* has no referent in science's world, and without grounding there, we are left unsure as to what the word denotes [italics in original]. (p. 256)

One can make the general statements that spirituality has to do with what Tillich (1963) called matters of "ultimate concern," and that the term can be used to refer to one's highest or ultimate values, highest or ultimate reality, and with one's relationship with those values and that reality. A hint of this view is found in James' (1902/1985) suggestion that the essence of the religious (today, we could say spiritual) sentiment involved a consciousness that

[one's] higher part is conterminous and continuous with a MORE of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside of [one], and which [one] can keep in working touch with, and in a fashion get on board of and save [one]self when all [one's] lower being has gone to pieces in the wreck. (p. 508)

Vaughan (2002) indicated that

Spirituality may also be described in terms of ultimate belonging or connection to the transcendental ground of being. Some people define spirituality in terms of relationship to God, to fellow humans, or to the earth. Others define it in terms of devotion and commitment to a particular faith or form of practice. To understand how spirituality can contribute to the good life, defined in humanistic terms as living authentically the full possibilities of being human . . . it seems necessary to differentiate healthy spirituality from beliefs and practices that may be detrimental to well-being. (p. 17)

Another general treatment of spirituality was provided by Lindholm and Astin (2006):

At its core, spirituality involves the internal process of seeking personal authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness; transcending one's locus of centrality; developing a greater

sense of connectedness to self and others through relationships and community; deriving meaning, purpose, and direction in life; being open to exploring a relationship with a higher power that transcends human existence and human knowing; and valuing the sacred. (p. 65)

Alluded to in the above definitions, but perhaps not sufficiently emphasized, are the relational, communal, interconnected, embodied, earth-based, and nature-related aspects that are important in feminine and indigenous forms of spirituality and in spirituality as lived in other cultures.

Our understanding of spirituality can be enlarged by considering features of what has been called *spiritual intelligence*. Vaughan (2002) has described the most important of these features:

Spiritual intelligence is concerned with the inner life of mind and spirit and its relationship to being in the world. Spiritual intelligence implies a capacity for a deep understanding of existential questions and insight into multiple levels of consciousness . . . awareness of spirit as the ground of being or as the creative life force of evolution . . . awareness of our relationship to the transcendent, to each other, to the earth and all beings.

Spiritual intelligence opens the heart, illuminates the mind, and inspires the soul, connecting the individual human psyche to the underlying ground of being . . . can help a person distinguish reality from illusion . . . [and] may be expressed in any culture as love, wisdom, and service. Spiritual intelligence is related to emotional intelligence insofar as spiritual practice includes developing intrapersonal and interpersonal sensitivity . . . paying attention to subjective thoughts and feelings and cultivating empathy . . . see[ing] things from more than one perspective and recogniz[ing] the relationships between perception, belief, and behavior. . . . We rely on spiritual intelligence when we explore

the meaning of questions such as “Who am I?” “Why am I here?” and “What really matters?” Perhaps spiritual intelligence can also help a person discover hidden wellsprings of love and joy beneath the stress and turmoil of everyday life. (pp. 19-20)

Another treatment of spirituality as a form of “intelligence” was provided by Emmons (2000). Emmons contended that spirituality is a form of intelligence, based on the ability of spirituality to foster transcendence; help one enter into a heightened state of consciousness; invest everyday activities, events, and relationships with a sense of the sacred; serve as a resource for solving practical life problems and difficulties; and foster virtuous behaviors.

Our understanding of spirituality also can be enhanced by considering spiritual *practices*. A set of such practices, common to many spiritual and wisdom traditions, has been summarized by Walsh (1999). These include transforming motivation (reducing craving and finding one’s soul’s desires), cultivating emotional wisdom (healing one’s heart and learning to love), living ethically, concentrating and calming the mind, awakening one’s spiritual vision (seeing clearly and recognizing the sacred in all things), cultivating spiritual intelligence (developing wisdom and understanding life), and expressing spirit in action (embracing generosity and the joy of service). Rothberg (2006), in his articulation of an engaged spiritual life, has presented a related set of spiritual practices. Among these are ethical practices, mindfulness in action, clarifying and setting intentions, opening to suffering and compassion, caring for self and for the world, recognizing the value of not knowing and of nonattachment, cultivating a sense of interdependence, transforming anger, acting with equanimity, and acting without attachment to outcomes.

McCulloch (2006) has provided a useful summary of characteristics of spirituality that are most directly relevant to the workplace. The features of spirituality that have been most frequently mentioned in the workplace context include transcendence; the sense of contributing to or being connected with something larger than oneself; the importance of seeing one’s work or

organization as serving others; the need to feel a connection with others; a sense of meaning, satisfaction, fulfillment, and purpose; spiritual well-being or wellness; the sense that one's work environment is supportive of one's spiritual values; bringing one's whole self to one's work; personal development of one's full potential; and direct linkages with values such as ethics, hope, honesty, and forgiveness (pp. 12-13).

Another characterization of spirituality, as it manifests in business, was provided by Stanczak and Miller (2002):

Elements of business spirituality that are common across studies include: recognition of the worth and value of people or employee centered management, optimal human development, a working climate of high integrity, creating trust, faith, justice, respect, and love, and meeting both the economic and individual needs of employees. Repeatedly, authors argue that a spiritual workplace, while having subjective effects on morale and universal responsibility, also has significant effects on output and profitability. (p. 8)

Given this brief overview of spirituality, how might this be most effectively studied in the workplace?

A First Step: Quantitative, Standardized Assessment Approaches

A quantitative approach, using standardized assessment instruments, suggests itself as an obvious first step in studying spirituality in the workplace. Such an approach is one that is familiar to researchers, is well-respected, and has a long track record. The approach may be used descriptively, to learn about the presence, absence, relative degrees, and forms of various spiritual characteristics in the members and parts of organizations. It also can be used to compare, contrast, and correlate various indications of spirituality within and between individuals and organizations.

Standardized assessment instruments can be efficiently presented and analyzed, and can yield useful third-person appreciations of how aspects of spirituality present themselves in the

workplace. They can allow more “objective” indicators, which can be tested for reliability and validity, and can be compared with the findings of other investigators, at other times and places. Such assessments can serve both organizations and individuals by providing useful signposts or benchmarks for monitoring the development of spirituality and for identifying accompaniments and outcomes of spiritual experiences and the factors that might either facilitate or impede these experiences. Patterns revealed through assessment instruments can provide useful feedback to both individuals and organizations, and they also can serve to validate the reality and importance of less familiar, and possibly troubling, spiritual experiences. Additionally, standardized instruments that have a projective nature can be used to help bypass various defenses and resistances that could obscure or distort what might be revealed by nonprojective indicators with obvious face validity.

Researchers favoring this approach can choose from a set of standardized instruments that have been developed to tap various aspects of spirituality. Useful information about these instruments can be found in extensive and detailed review articles by MacDonald and his co-workers (see Friedman & MacDonald, 1997; MacDonald & Friedman, 2002; MacDonald, Friedman, & Kuentzel, 1999; MacDonald, Kuentzel, & Friedman, 1999; and MacDonald, LeClair, Holland, Alter, & Friedman, 1995).

Among the frequently used assessments are the following:

- Egocentric Grasping Orientation Inventory (EGO; Knoblauch & Falconer, 1986): A 20-item self-report scale of the tendency toward ego-grasping, ego-striving, attempting to make things more positive while striving to eliminate the negative aspects of human experience. High scores indicate a tendency opposite that of a Taoistic way of being in the world. The scale could be used as a measure of a more accepting, going-with-the-flow conception of Eastern spirituality.

- Expressions of Spirituality Inventory (ESI; MacDonald, 2000): A 98-item test developed to assess five dimensions of spirituality. The dimensions (subscales) consist of the following: (a) Cognitive Orientation Towards Spirituality (spiritual beliefs and perceptions), (b) Experiential/Phenomenological Dimension (spiritual experience), (c) Existential Well-being, (d) Paranormal Beliefs, and (e) Religiousness.
- Index of Core Spiritual Experience (INSPIRIT; Kass, Friedman, Leserman, Zuttermeister, & Benson, 1991): A 19-item self-report scale of the degree to which one has beliefs and experiences of a higher power and one's relation to that power, and indications of transpersonal experiences; in a 4-point Likert scale format.
- Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI; Hall & Edwards, 1996): A 43-item assessment in 5-point rating scale format, developed for pastoral counselors and others with religious clients; it is based on a relational theology and emphasizes awareness and quality dimensions of one's relationship with the divine and with others.
- Spiritual Orientation Inventory (SOI; Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf, & Saunders, 1988): An 85-item assessment of "humanistic spirituality" containing nine subscales: transcendent dimension, meaning and purpose, mission in life, sacredness of life, material values, altruism, idealism, awareness of the tragic, and fruits of spirituality; 5-point Likert scale format.
- Spiritual Perspective Scale (SPS; Reed, 1987): A 10-item self-report scale of the saliency of spiritual beliefs and behaviors in many different aspects of the participant's life; 6-point Likert scale format; the scale was developed primarily for assessing the elderly, in a nursing context.
- Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWB; Ellison, 1983): Developed as a general indicator of the subjective state of well-being, the SWB provides an overall measure of the perceived

spiritual quality of life in two senses: religious and existential. It consists of 20 items on a 7-point Likert scale, with two subscales.

- Spirituality Assessment Scale (SAS; Howden, 1992): A measure of spirituality that does not rely upon any religious theory or terminology. It consists of 28 items and uses a 6-point Likert scale, with four subscales: unifying interconnectedness, purpose and meaning in life, innerness or inner resources, and transcendence.

In addition to standardized assessments of various forms of spirituality, there exist many standardized instruments for measuring aspects of meaning, purpose, and life satisfaction—all of which are highly relevant to spirituality as manifested in the workplace. Workers in the area of management, spirituality, and religion can make use of already existing instruments, such as those mentioned above, and also may develop new scales that can be designed to measure aspects of spirituality of greatest relevance to the workplace.

Researchers wishing to use standardized assessment instruments for studies of workplace spirituality should be aware of an important recent critique of such instruments by Edwards (2003). Edwards highlighted four problems inherent in typical questionnaires, when these are used in an insufficiently thoughtful manner to assess constructs such as spirituality. He argued that (a) the design of some questionnaires has been so closely modeled on the design of traditional psychometric scales that unclear wording of questions has resulted; (b) the design of such scales has sometimes been heavily influenced by Jewish and Christian monotheism, rendering their use to assess spiritual experiences of persons in other traditions problematical; (c) such scales typically refer to experiences having to do with "God" rather than a "Goddess," indicating an implicit patriarchal bias; and (d) a bias towards logical thinking has precluded researchers from appreciating how, in transpersonal research, mid-range ratings on Likert-type scales may be intentional references to paradox (p. 3). Such "neutral" ratings may suggest a "both/and" (transcendent and inclusive) appreciation of both "poles" of a questionnaire item and

could imply that some mid-range scores might actually indicate a greater level of a spiritually relevant quality than might higher scores. Two of Edwards' critiques are especially relevant to diversity concerns, when dealing with spiritual theory and research.

An especially promising, but as yet not well known, assessment instrument is the standardized, holistic/intuitive *projective differential* (PD; Reynolds, 1997) procedure that qualitatively and quantitatively assesses the salient integration of cognitive and affective reactions to any topics that a researcher wishes to evaluate. The PD uses choice responses to very briefly presented pairs of carefully designed, abstract images in order to register holistic, intuitive, affective (nonverbal, "unconscious") reactions, preferences, and attitudes. It has features similar to those of the more familiar Semantic Differential (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957). It resembles a tachistoscopic Rorschach presentation. The rapid and projective nature of the procedure serves to minimize deliberate, conscious distortions, and, therefore, the PD results may have greater validity than do many deliberate, verbal assessments. The PD procedures also include built-in indicators of the discrepancy or incongruence between its own novel (imagistic, intuitive, affective) measures and more traditional (verbal, consciously and deliberately considered) measures. The PD can easily be adapted to research on spirituality in the workplace by simply choosing relevant topics to be evaluated. For example, topics could include aspects of one's own spirituality and of certain parts or aspects of the organization in which one works.

The PD has been used in an extensive series of research studies over the past 30 years. It has been found that people readily make PD choices to virtually any topic (ranging from brands of canned dog food to presidential candidates), that there is high consistency (agreement beyond chance expectation) of responses for a given topic (when participants have similar understandings of it and feelings toward it), and each topic tends to be associated with a unique pattern of PD responses that allows it to be discriminated from other topics. The PD technique is

a robust one, yielding consistent and reliable effects that are not masked appreciably by moderate physical or other variations in test administration conditions. The PD has been used to assess attitudes toward a variety of topics, to provide significant indications of subsequent behaviors, and to assess change and transformation in a variety of organizational and educational settings.

McCulloch (2006) used the PD with great effectiveness in his multi-faceted study of how three for-profit businesses incorporated spirituality. In addition to the PD, McCulloch employed the Semantic Differential, the Expressions of Spirituality Inventory (mentioned above), questionnaires for all employees, and in-depth interviews with senior executives.

The PD data uncovered participants' implicit, nonverbal perceptions of the spirituality of their organizations, themselves, and their opposite cohorts, highlighting degrees of alignment between management and employees at a latent level of awareness. [The PD's] incongruence data indicated disparities between nonverbal and verbal perceptions, showing that management and employee cohorts experienced different levels of pressure to perceive their organizations and their opposite cohorts as spiritual. All organizations exhibited misalignment between their management teams' and employees' perceptions, and differences in the amount of pressure each experienced. Although both management and employees of the most explicitly spiritual organization exhibited generally more positive perceptions of the spirituality of their organization, and mostly lower levels of incongruence, they did not exhibit overall higher levels of alignment than the other organizations. Differences among the three cultures and approaches to spirituality were discussed in terms of some previously published frameworks, and addressed: levels of management-employee trust required; management control desired; behavior-values congruence exhibited; and alignment of management and employee perceptions. This study demonstrates the value of including data from an implicit, nonverbal level of perception along with more explicit, verbal levels of information to derive quantitative

measures of congruence and management-employee alignment, producing a deeper view into three very different organizations' unique approaches to incorporating spirituality and the implications of each. (pp. iii-iv)

A Further Step: Qualitative Research Approaches

This is not the place to describe, in detail, the nature of qualitative research or its important differences from quantitative research. It is sufficient to indicate some of the most notable features of qualitative research approaches. Qualitative research deals with words (usually collected via written or spoken first person accounts); focuses on rich and thick descriptions, meanings, and interpretations of experiences and of the lived worlds of research participants; is interested in the process (long-term unfolding) and dynamics of experiences; is discovery rather than proof orientated; values particulars rather than universals; explores research questions rather than tests hypotheses; and involves the researcher as the primary research "instrument."

Major forms of qualitative research include *ethnographic research* (which attempts to understand the nature, practices, and beliefs of a given culture or group, based in observational field work and reports of informants), *case studies* (which are intensive treatments of a single event, process, individual, or group, using multiple forms of evidence), *phenomenological research* (which seeks rich and full descriptions of subjective experiences, and their meanings to the experiencer, free from the researcher's own presuppositions about the phenomenon in question), *grounded theory* (which seeks an emergent theoretical, conceptual understanding, free from an a priori theory, and grounded in fresh data collection), *participatory and collaborative research* (in which all parties involved in some action or problem cooperatively plan, carry out, and evaluate some ongoing practice, service, or process, in order to understand and improve it), and *oral history and narrative research* (which seek accounts of important life events and experiences, in the participants' own terms, with an emphasis on either the past or present). Any

of these foregoing methods can be applied to individuals, groups, or entire organizations within a workplace context.

We may view qualitative research as going a step beyond quantitative research in that it is more flexible; more able to address the complexity and richness of human experience; and able to address broader time spans, greater nuances, and more interactions and interrelationships of the topics being considered. The greater certainty, confidence, and universal (nomothetic) claims of quantitative research are exchanged, here, for a deeper, more intensive, extensive, and holistic appreciation of individual instances (an idiographic emphasis), and their personal meanings and perceived significance. Useful resources that treat the types and advantages of different qualitative research approaches include Creswell (1997), Denzin and Lincoln (1994), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Mertens (2004), and Polkinghorne (1989).

A Still Further Step: Transpersonal Inquiries

More recently, researchers in the field of transpersonal psychology and related areas have developed forms of disciplined inquiry that go a step beyond the more familiar qualitative research approaches mentioned above. These include heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990), intuitive inquiry (Anderson, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2004), organic inquiry (Braud, 2004; Clements, 2004), and integral inquiry (Braud, 1998a, 1998b, 2002, 2006; Braud & Anderson, 1998). These transpersonal inquiries are characterized by a greater degree of inclusiveness and integration in the following areas:

- Greater involvement of the researcher and of the researcher's whole person
- A greater variety of functions and benefits of a research session
- A wider range of the researcher's sources of inspiration
- Inclusion of multiple ways of knowing, on the part of researcher, participants, and audiences
- Types of topics and types of research questions explored

- Variety of ways of collecting, working with, and presenting data and findings
- More inclusive epistemology and ontology
- Relevant values and ethical considerations

Each of these areas is elaborated below.

As in all forms of qualitative research, the researcher plays an extremely important role as the chief “instrument” of the investigation. However, in the various transpersonal inquiries, the researcher is involved even more extensively and deeply. The researcher tends to explore topics that she or he already has experienced and that have great personal meaning and importance. In some of these inquiries, the project begins with the researcher’s own “story” about the topic being studied (in organic inquiry) or with a topic or process that the researcher already has experienced personally, intensively, and extensively (in heuristic inquiry). In intuitive inquiry, the research topic is one that has already “claimed” the researcher, personally, and is one about which the researcher already has certain initial understandings or “lenses”; these lenses are explicitly presented, used, and modified as the study progresses, rather than disowned (as in many quantitative investigations) or bracketed away (as in most forms of phenomenological research). In all of the transpersonal inquiries, the researcher’s personal acquaintance with the researched topic and prior preparedness or adequateness are of utmost importance. The researcher brings his or her entire self, including his or her many predispositions, skills, sensitivities, and forms of knowing, into the service of the investigation.

The aim of a “research session” includes not only an increase in *information*, but also an intention for the increased psychospiritual growth, development, and possible *transformation*, not only of the research participants, but of the researcher and audiences of the research project (those who ultimately will receive information about the research project and its findings) as well. Important benefits of participating in a research project—as well as conducting and learning about the research project—are anticipated because of the nature of chosen projects:

They tend to address topics and issues of great meaning and importance to the researcher, participants, and audiences.

In selecting, preparing for, conducting, interpreting, and presenting the results of a research project, the researcher is guided not only by formally published theories and findings, but also by relevant anecdotal evidence, and by his or her own personal experiences related to the topic in question. The researcher seeks information and inspiration not only in the discipline in which he or she is working (e.g., psychology, management), but also in a wide range of other disciplines (the social and human sciences, the humanities, the arts, various spiritual and wisdom traditions). Early (even very early) thoughts and findings are not neglected in favor of only the most recent and most fashionable thoughts and findings.

In the transpersonal inquiries, multiple ways of knowing are encouraged in the researcher, research participants, and audiences. These include not only the familiar intellect-based forms, but also feeling-based, body-based, imagery-based, and intuitional modes that usually are less appreciated in conventional disciplined inquiries. An additional form of knowing that has received relatively little attention in the context of research and disciplined inquiry is *direct knowing*. Such knowing can occur through sympathetic resonance, empathic identification, parapsychological processes (such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition), and certain forms of intuition. Perhaps the most extreme, and most controversial, form of direct knowing is knowing through being, through becoming, or through identifying with what is to be known. One description of this form of knowing is the process of *samyama* in the Yogic tradition of Patanjali, in which one identifies with what is to be known through the practice of deep concentration, meditation, and absorption in an object or focus of intention and attention. The Indian philosopher Sri Aurobindo has used the terms *intuition* and *knowledge by identity* for this form of direct knowing (see Braud, 2007, for treatments of these forms of knowing within Indian philosophy and psychology).

Of great relevance to the Ouroboros metaphor of like illuminating like, introduced at the beginning of this article, is the transpersonal inquirers' use of what might be called *transpersonal, integral, or holistic research skills*. These are spiritual practices (such as mindfulness, discernment, compassion, appreciation of differences, and direct knowing) or spiritual-related practices (such as working with intention, attention, empathic identification, quieting the body and mind) that can be employed in the service of research for purposes of gaining, working with, and expressing information, knowledge, and wisdom. The use of such “spiritual” practices to study spirituality in the workplace would be a definite instance of the Ouroboros principle—using spiritual approaches to further identify, understand, and illuminate spiritual topics.

Transpersonal inquiry may be characterized by the nature of the topics investigated and by the types of questions asked about these topics. Transpersonal inquirers emphasize the study of experiences in which one's sense of identity; stage of development; state of consciousness; and ways of knowing, being, and doing can be extended or expanded beyond those typically considered in conventional psychology. Research projects frequently address issues in areas of spirituality, ego-transcendence, wisdom, psychospiritual growth and development, personal and societal transformation, and wholeness (whole person knowing, being, and expression). Hartelius, Caplan, and Rardin (2007) have provided a useful service of identifying and detailing some of the topics just mentioned in a report of their extensive thematic content analysis of published definitional treatments and analyses of the field of transpersonal psychology.

In my own Integral Inquiry research approach (see Braud, 1998b), I have suggested four major types of research questions that are appropriate for exploring any topic. These questions address the nature, conceptualization (and history), process (including accompaniments), and outcomes (after-effects, “fruits”) of a given experience or phenomenon. Specific forms of each

of these types of questions, as these might be asked in the context of spirituality in the workplace, are illustrated in Table 1.

 Insert Table 1 about here

The research questions mentioned in Table 1 can be explored using a wide range of methods for collecting data, working with data, and expressing results and findings. The transpersonal inquirer can collect original data regarding spirituality in the workplace through the use of standardized assessment instruments, questionnaires, interviews, surveys, observations of others, participant self-reports (self-observations and self-reflections), reports offered by others, accessing textual material (including public and archival data), asking participants to contribute nonverbal materials such as artwork or photos, and accessing a variety of the researcher's own personal and spiritual resources ("unconscious" materials, dreams, intuition, imagery, feelings, bodily sources, parapsychological knowings, direct knowing). Throughout data collection, the researcher can maintain a transpersonal stance by treating research participants appropriately and compassionately and exercising mindfulness, discernment, and appreciation of differences.

The integral inquirer not only will collect data from a variety of sources, but also will make use of multiple modes of knowing (treated above) in accessing and treating the information from each source, and also will consider collecting relevant information not only from the formal research participants, but also from others who know the participants and might be able and willing to provide additional information about them and about the accompaniments and outcomes of their experiences, from these other persons' "external" points of view. These others could be persons who know the participants very well (e.g., family members, loved ones) and persons who know the participants less well (e.g., fellow workers, acquaintances). This approach of soliciting information from a variety of informants is a variation of the so-called

360-degree feedback procedures used for evaluating performance in various organizational contexts.

In the data treatment and interpretation stages of a study, the transpersonal inquirer can work with the collected data in conventional, analytical ways, but also can use additional skills and resources, such as increased mindfulness and discernment in detecting patterns in findings, and gaining additional assistance from intuitions, gestalt apprehensions, dreams, imagery, emotions, movement, creative expression, symbols, metaphors, and archetypal elaborations. The researcher can work with the collected data in various conditions of consciousness (alert waking consciousness, relaxed awareness, during active imagination and guided imagery, following meditation, during dream-like or twilight conditions of awareness), by being informed by subtle bodily changes and feelings, and during and following release of effort in which one ceases active conscious processing and allows incubation and unconscious processing to occur and augment one's understandings.

In the reporting and communicating stage of a study, the researcher can express findings through conventional modes of data presentation (statistical outcomes, tables, and graphs, in quantitative research projects; narratives, themes, metaphors, similes, and symbols in qualitative projects), but can supplement these by nonverbal creative expressions, audio-visual accompaniments (including CDs, DVDs), inclusion of active links to additional Internet and website information, and suggestions to readers to prepare themselves to appreciate the findings in certain ways (including suggestions for altering consciousness). Research reports can be directed to professional audiences (via scholarly articles, book chapters, and books) and also to the public at large (via more popular books and articles, lectures, workshops, and trainings) using "languages" and modes of presentation that will appeal to members of different audiences. The research project also can generate action

outcomes (follow up activities, meetings, groups, projects, organizations) that can help the project have a practical impact upon the community.

Transpersonal researchers tend to subscribe to a pluralistic epistemology and ontology. The epistemology is aligned with James' *radical empiricism* (1912/1976), in which one includes only what is based in experience, but includes *everything* that is based in experience. James also espoused a *radical ontology*—although he never used this term—in which he considered the “real” to be anything that we find ourselves obliged to take into account in any way (James, 1911).

For the transpersonal inquirer, research is not viewed as being value free. The researcher hopes that in addition to providing new and valid knowledge, a research project's findings also will help make a difference in the world, that the project's results will carry some important implications about human nature and about society, and that they might suggest practical applications that could benefit individuals, organizations, and the global community. The transpersonal inquirer is sensitive to the world's greatest needs and is likely to devise research projects that might help increase our understanding of the nature of those needs and aid in their alleviation. Also, because of the researcher's great personal involvement in his or her research projects, the researcher is likely to study experiences and processes that have strong personal meaning and are thus likely to involve values and ethical considerations of importance to the researcher.

The transpersonal inquirer recognizes a set of important needs, which are identical for individuals, organizations, and the global community. These include adequate satisfaction of basic human requirements; adequate standards of living; values and motivations that prevent or minimize conflict; effective means of resolving conflicts that do occur; peace; sustainability of the natural environment; and values and conditions that allow life to have meaning, importance,

and significance. Stated somewhat differently, these important needs include health, security, peace, love, clarity, compassion, wisdom, and joy.

Factors that can interfere with the satisfaction of the needs just mentioned, and that can contribute to unhealthy and unsustainable world conditions and to individual and organizational ill health, include arrogance and hubris; greed and selfishness, intolerance of others (and their ways and values); fanaticism; narrowness; fear; overly materialistic values; unequal distribution of wealth, goods, and necessities; proclivities toward violence; cruelty; war-mongering; and dishonesty.

Factors that can contribute to healthy and sustainable world conditions and to individual, relational, organizational, and societal health and well-being include humility; sharing and generosity; tolerance of others (and their ways and values) and appreciation of differences; fairness (honest, just, and equitable treatment of others); compassion and caring; respect for human and animal life and for the environment; honesty, authenticity, integrity, and truth-telling (full, accurate, uncensored, undistorted information); and thoughtfulness, discernment, and critical thinking. Other beneficial characteristics, qualities, and tendencies include patience, humor, acceptance, generosity, forgiveness, curiosity, equanimity, gratitude, flexibility, nonattachment, cooperation, collaboration, and appreciation of the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans with one another and with all of nature.

In planning research projects that explore workplace spirituality, the researcher can attend to ways in which the projects might be designed in order to address not only specific research questions but also factors such as those mentioned above that are of great value to the researcher, to the particular persons and organizations studied, and to the world at large.

The Three Metaphors Revisited . . . and Additional Suggestions

It is useful to return to the three metaphors mentioned at the beginning of this article. The Dragon/Ouroboros symbol suggests that workplace spirituality might be optimally explored

when spiritually relevant approaches and the researcher's own "spiritual" qualities and skills are included, and even emphasized, in the research endeavor. Processes such as mindfulness, discernment, compassion, appreciation of differences, intuition, direct knowing, and attention to the *values* mentioned above, can be employed by the researcher, the research participants, all members of the organization being explored, and by the prospective audiences of the research report, in order to enhance understandings and apprehensions that might arise during a research project. The whole of the researcher—that is, all aspects of his or her ways of knowing, being, and doing—can confront as directly and as fully as possible the whole of the topic or process being explored in the study.

The sphere-versus-circle metaphor can help remind the researcher of dimensional considerations, and that it will be necessary to augment and expand one's research methods, skills, and sensitivities in order to address previously hidden or neglected aspects of the studied topic. Still another analogy can help us understand the importance of extending the dimensionality of our research approach. Imagine an array, in three dimensions, of a cylinder, a cone, a sphere, and a disc. The projections (or shadows) of these four different objects onto a 2-dimensional horizontal plane might appear as four very similar or even identical circles. In confining one's consideration to this 2-dimensional horizontal plane alone, one might mistakenly conclude that the objects casting these projections or shadows are identical. It is necessary to observe the projections in another dimensional aspect (e.g., by studying their projections onto another, vertical, plane) or even better, to observe their full dimensionality more directly (by seeing in depth or by touching the objects), in order to appreciate the objects' nature more fully. The expanded research methods and skills described in previous sections of this article can help extend the dimensionality of one's study, and help one arrive at a more complete understanding of workplace spirituality or of any other topic.

The searching-in-the-light-for-what-was-lost-in-the-dark metaphor can remind us of two things. The first is to beware of using research methods merely because they are handy, familiar, or well-regarded, but rather, to discern what one is truly seeking to learn, whether the chosen approach is an appropriate one, and whether there might be alternative, and possibly more efficient, ways of finding what one is seeking. The second reminder is not to be distracted from one's true quest by wonderfully interesting but ultimately extraneous objects of attention. In the light, one might remember to search for and find parts for constructing a flashlight that might allow one to probe the darkness more effectively. An example of such a flashlight was the construction of the projective differential (see above) as an appropriate tool for exploring topics in more intuitive, holistic, and nonverbal ways.

Many specific suggestions for possible research questions applicable to workplace spirituality already have been presented (see the rightmost column of Table 1). In addition to those questions, additional attention might be devoted to the following issues:

- How might the extended research skills, methods, and approaches mentioned in this article be directly applied to workplace spirituality research?
- How might research projects on workplace spirituality be designed so as to address, more directly, the *values* of the researchers and of the persons and organizations being studied?
- How are findings regarding spirituality applicable not only to individuals, but also to relationships, organizations, and to the global community at large?
- How might the *transformative potential* of research be enhanced—for researcher, research participants, the studied organization, and the prospective recipients (audiences) of the research report?
- How might spirituality be *engaged* and *embodied* more fully in individuals, in the workplace, and in society as a whole?

Transformative Change

An important consideration for studies of workplace spirituality is the possible relationship of individual and organizational spirituality to personal and organizational *transformation*. Transformation can be revealed by important changes in attitudes, values, and ways of knowing, being, and doing. In a previous article (Braud, 2006), I suggested that in order to be considered transformative, observed changes should be persistent, pervasive, and profound; that article also included additional useful information about transformation. Clements (2004) suggested other criteria that might be used to identify transformative change: The changes should be ones that bring an individual closer to self, spirit, and service. A recent report on global, institutional, and personal transformation (Institute of Noetic Sciences, 2007) included another useful view of transformation:

Using the words “transformation” and “change” synonymously might not be fully accurate. Many interviewed teachers reported that the greatest change we need to make in ourselves is no change at all. Rather, it is a slight turning of attention and a subtle redirecting of intention that can shift the entire landscape of our lived experience. *Transformation is not so much a change of the person but a change in perspective. It is a profound shift in our human experience of consciousness that results in long-lasting alterations in worldview—how one experiences and relates to oneself, others, culture, nature and the divine [italics in original].* (p. 69)

Interrelationships among transformation, spirituality, and other personal and workplace factors can be studied qualitatively through the use of questionnaires and interviews and quantitatively through the use of various standardized assessment instruments. A useful instance of the latter is the Life Changes Inventory-Revised (Greyson & Ring, 2004). The instrument originally was developed to assess changes in attitudes and values following a near-death experience. It has since been used to assess transformative changes following a variety of other

experiences, especially transpersonal and spiritual experiences. The instrument could be used in an “absolute” manner to provide a snapshot or benchmark of one’s current condition or in a “relative” way to assess changes that might be attributable to particular experiences or interventions. The instrument assesses changes in nine subareas or “value clusters”: appreciation for life, self-acceptance, concern for others, concern with worldly achievement, concern with social/planetary values, quest for meaning/sense of purpose, spirituality, religiousness, and appreciation of death. In addition to assessing changes, the instrument might itself serve as a useful measure of spirituality.

All in all, I hope that I was able to demonstrate the utility and relevance of transpersonal psychology’s research viewpoint, paradigms, and methods to the current and future spirituality at work research agenda.

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Table 1

Examples of Research Questions Relevant to the Topic of Workplace Spirituality

| Type of Research Question | Specific Examples of Possible Questions |
|--|--|
| The nature and experience of workplace spirituality | <p>How is workplace spirituality experienced or perceived?</p> <p>This question could be asked in terms of a one’s experience and perception of (a) one’s own spiritual experience in the workplace, (b) the workplace spirituality of one’s coworkers (and supervisors, supervisees, executives, etc.), (c) the spirituality of the organization as a whole (and of various parts of the organization).</p> <p>What are the various indications of spirituality in the workplace (i.e., how does it show up)?</p> <p>Persons in the various constituencies of the workplace can be asked about how spirituality manifests or is experienced in various constituencies—including one’s own and others’.</p> |
| Conceptualizations of workplace spirituality | <p>How might workplace spirituality be conceptualized?</p> <p>What might be some useful explanations or interpretations of workplace spirituality?</p> <p>How have those interpretations changed, historically?</p> <p>How might conceptualizations, interpretations, and explanations of workplace spirituality vary for different types of organizations, different services, and different cultures?</p> |
| The process and accompaniments of workplace spirituality | <p>How has workplace spirituality unfolded and developed as a process—For the individual? For the organization as a whole? For specific parts of the organization?</p> <p>What have been the accompaniments of spirituality in the workplace? (Accompaniments could be explored in areas of bodily reactions, emotions, ways of thinking, productivity, profits, and so on.)</p> <p>What factors appear to have set the stage for the occurrence (arising), growth, maintenance, increase, or decline, of workplace spirituality? For the individual? For specific parts of the organization? For the organization as a whole?</p> <p>Which factors appear to have fostered or facilitated workplace spirituality? (Again, for the individual, part of an organization, or the organization as a whole.)</p> <p>Which factors seem to have interfered with or inhibited workplace spirituality? (Again, for the individual, part of an organization, or the organization as a whole.)</p> <p>How have those inhibiting factors been dealt with—by individuals, parts of the organization, the organization as a whole?</p> |
| Outcomes and aftereffects of workplace spirituality | <p>What have been the outcomes, consequences, aftereffects, or "fruits" of workplace spirituality? These can be examined in various areas (physical, emotional, social, economic) and in various “places” (individuals, parts of the organization, the overall organization).</p> <p>How might workplace spirituality itself be a fruit or outcome of other experiences or events?</p> <p>How has the presence of workplace spirituality been or not been useful?</p> |