

THE EXPERIENCE AND PRACTICE OF ADULT EDUCATORS IN ADDRESSING THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF THE WORKPLACE

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the connections between the workplace, spirituality and adult education by listening to the voices of 5 adult educators who are incorporating spirituality into their practice within their various workplace settings. Findings reveal that all participants described their spirituality as evolving and changing over time and as no longer limited to their religious heritage. As they linked their spirituality to their workplaces their central vocation was a desire to make their workplaces more just and compassionate. The energy they placed within this social advocacy role was directly dependent upon their workplaces' comprehension and desire to become a spiritually infused setting.

Résumé

Le but de cette étude qualitative était d'évaluer les liens qui existent entre le milieu de travail, la spiritualité et l'andragogie, en se penchant sur l'expérience de cinq formateurs, qui incorporent la spiritualité dans leur pratique professionnelle. Les conclusions de cette recherche révèlent que l'expérience spirituelle des participants a évolué et s'est transformée avec le temps et qu'elle n'est plus limitée à leur héritage religieux. En liant leur expérience spirituelle à leur engagement professionnel, leur vocation première était de rendre leur milieu de travail plus juste et empathique. La somme d'énergie déployée dans ce rôle de promotion sociale était directement proportionnelle au degré de compréhension et au désir de leurs collègues de faire de leur milieu de travail un endroit inspiré de valeurs spirituelles.

Spirituality and the workplace in the same sentence seem like unlikely partners; that is until recently. This past decade has seen a flood of journal and magazine articles, as well as popular business books that focus on the

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topic of spirituality and soul in business. As Miller (1999) stated, “people feel that something is missing” in their lives. People who have achieved a degree of material affluence often end up asking the question: ‘Is that all?’” (p. 3).

In the discussion of spirituality in the workplace, there has been an attempt to dismiss this trend by limiting spirituality to religious faith and to conclude therefore that it does not belong in our work settings. For example, Pearson (1999), in an article in the *National Post*, associated spirituality in the workplace with ritual drumming, soul rooms, monks and contemplation. She attempted to place spirituality in unusual places to demonstrate that the fit between work and spirit is a poor one. “It’s difficult to imagine management generated spirituality going over at, for instance, Hooters. “OK ladies, time to put modest sweaters over your tight T-shirts and contemplate God for 10 minutes! Finished? Good. Chop, chop, back to work” (p. B4). However, this attempt to spirituality within the workplace into such a narrow place in our lives misses what it is all about As Briskin (1996) states:

We can all turn to the soul as a way to ground ourselves in something “outside of” and larger than ourselves. Beneath the contemporary language of enhancing workplace productivity lie deeper questions about where we are going, how we will survive, what really matters and what we surrender. These are the soul’s questions. (p. 28)

Running parallel to the increasing interest in spirituality within the workplace has been an increasing interest in the spiritual dimensions of adult learning (Hunt, 1998; Westrup, 1998; English and Gillen, 2000; Tisdell, 2000 and Dirks, 1997). However, we have only just commenced making connections between adult education and spirituality within the workplace setting. In addition concern has been expressed as to whether it is appropriate to address the spiritual dimensions of learners within this setting (Fenwick & Lange, 1998). Like English and Gillen (2000), I believe that a spirituality that contributes to the common good, both within the workplace and in the larger community is a worthy endeavor. Specifically, the attention that spirituality is garnering within larger community has the potential to improve conditions of work and support the well being of people within a society that is becoming increasingly out of balance and stressed by the fast-paced demands of our work culture.

The purpose of this inquiry was to begin to explore the connections between the workplace, spirituality and adult education by listening to the voices of adult educators who are incorporating spirituality into their practice

within their various workplace settings. Adult educators who work within this context are usually known as trainers, organizational and/or community developers and human resource consultants. More specifically this research explored a) the spiritual journeys of adult educators and how their spirituality influences their practice as adult educators within their workplaces and b) how their workplaces' commitment and ability to address the spiritual dimensions of the organization influences their roles. Finally, this study suggests implications for how adult educators may draw on spirituality for their own adult education practice and it also offers beginning insights on how a holistic view of spirituality within the workplace that addresses such issues as balance, stress and ethical practices has multiple benefits for our organizations and its people.

Related Literature

The theoretical framework for this inquiry focuses on sources of literature from organizational development and management theorists, adult learning theorists and the popular press. Before reviewing the literature that intertwines spirituality with the workplace and adult education, it important to explore the concept of spirituality within its own right: what is spirituality and how to I define it? The process of trying to define spirituality is really a paradox. As Whyte (1994) aptly explained "it [spirit] evades the cage of definition. It is the indefinable essence of a person's spirit and being. It can never be touched yet the merest hint of its absence causes immediate distress" (p. 13). What is critical to distinguish at the outset is that I am not equating spirituality with religion. While I grew up within a Christian environment and believe that my religious upbringing informs my spirituality (Tisdell, 2000), they are not the same. Van Ness (1996) was helpful in distinguishing these two when he uses the terms "religious spirituality" and "secular spirituality" and states that religious spirituality is based on a set of organized principles that are shared by a group, whereas a secular spirituality is based on an individual pursuit of meaning, one's personal beliefs and experience of a higher power. This study bases itself on a secular spirituality.

In seeking to give further shape to the concept of secular spirituality, the concept of meaning seeking and a yearning for connectedness and community are consistent themes that resonate with me. Central to the pursuit of meaning in one's life and a belief in our connectedness with others is an outward response: "authentic spirituality moves one outward to others as an expression of one's spiritual experiences" (English and Gillen, 2000, p. 1). Bean (2000) wrote about a secular spirituality for our time that is particularly relevant for us as adult educators. "There remains within us a

need for meaning, for understanding how our lives fit into the larger world ...it gives rise to a number of concerns, such as the suffering of others and a desire to alleviate that suffering when possible” (p. 72). Seeing part of our “meaning making” within our spiritual journey as a response to suffering within our world brings us back to the another central quality of secular spirituality; we are connected to others and to the universe around us. Peck (1987) stated that we have a fundamental need to connect with others in order to feel whole:

It is true that we are created to be individually unique. Yet the reality is that we are inevitably social creatures who desperately need each other not merely for sustenance, not merely for company, but for any meaning to our lives whatsoever. (p. 35)

In conclusion, while part of our spirituality is associated with quiet times of contemplation, reflection and a pulling away from the world, for this inquiry I am most interested in a spirituality that is part of the world, wholly immersed in the political and social connections that surround us. Ultimately, I believe that this is what concerns us the most as adult educators and as a result can have tremendous implications for our practice within the workplace and for the workplace in general.

Spirituality and the Workplace

As mentioned previously, the links between spirituality and the workplace have only been made within the past decade. As these links are being made, compelling and critical questions are being asked about the motivation for uniting the two. Fenwick and Lange (1998) inquired: “Whose interests are served? What conception of need drives the program, according to whose perception and by whose authority?... Is the company genuinely motivated to support the whole person of a worker?”(p. 80).

Soul and Spirit in Adult Education

The final piece of the theoretical framework for this study looks at the connections between adult education and spirituality. Even though the term “spirituality” was used infrequently prior to the past decade, a few early theorists in adult education began to recognize its importance. For example, Basil Yeaxlee, writer of *Spiritual Values in Adult Education* (1925), is commonly heralded as one of the first adult educators who stressed the connection between adult education and spirituality, believing that all education has a spiritual base. At this time his work was largely dismissed

because it was written within the context of religious education. However, present adult education theorists who are exploring spirituality often cite his work as ground breaking and believe that his principles of adult education and spirituality go beyond religious confines.

Two of the first adult educators who began to openly discuss the spiritual dimensions of the learner are Virginia Griffin (1988) and Dorothy Mackeracher (1996). Griffin (1988) opened the discussion about spirituality in adult learning when she connected the complexity and holistic nature of learning with the process of learning to play a guitar. Each string is a human capability and one of those strings is our spiritual capability. Dorothy Mackeracher (1996) began her foray into this discussion with her book entitled *Making Sense of Adult Learning*. In this updated version of a previous edition, a new chapter entitled "Spirit Aspects: Learning beyond Body and Mind" (p.163-180) was included. Similarly, Clark and Caffarella (1999) recently included spirituality as a component within their adult development theory, situating spirituality as the integrative foundation of the other components: biological, psychological, and socio-cultural.

Several adult education theorists (Tisdell, 1999, Dirkx 1997) viewed spiritual learning as the holistic underpinning of adult learning. According to Dirkx (1997):

Transformative learning also involves very personal and imaginative ways of knowing, grounded in a more intuitive and emotional sense of our experiences.... But the soul dimensions of transformations have received little attention in our study of study adult learning. Our journey of self-knowledge also requires that we care for and nurture the presence of the soul dimension in teaching and learning. (p. 80)

Dirkx (1997) further suggested that by incorporating soul into transformative learning, we would go beyond the analytic, reflective and rational processes of transformation described by Mezirow (1991), because "learning through soul fosters self-knowledge through symbolic, imagistic and contemplative means" (p. 83).

As well as building upon transformational education, two additional connections between the spiritual dimensions of adult learning and key principles in adult education theory and tradition can be made: the interactive dimension of adult learning and learning within the context of justice and service to the larger community. The interactive dimension of adult learning and spirituality is talked about within the context of building community. Zeph (2000) inquired, "if spirituality is about realizing the connection between others and creation, is there a better place to help students realize

these connections through the formation of a learning group rooted in community” (p. 83). Key strategies that would foster the development of community are dialogue and storytelling. English (2000) connected dialogue to community and spiritual development when she stated that “dialogue points to the growing need to recognize the other as an extension of one’s self, not as alien or foreign. For adult educators, dialogue holds numerous possibilities for supporting spiritual development. (p. 36)

Links between adult education, spirituality and justice and service to the larger community have been made within two recent research studies (Tisdell, 2000 and English, 2001). These studies, like this inquiry, sought to explore how the spiritual journeys of adult educators informed their practice within their various contexts (international work, higher education and community education). While these two studies serve as an excellent launch, there is little research that explores the connections between spirituality, adult education and the workplace: a gap this study begins to address.

Research Methodology

This study was qualitative in nature and its purpose was to explore the personal and unique context of each adult educator’s spirituality, how they brought their spirituality into their work and their understanding and view of spirituality within their workplaces. There were a total of five participants in this study and they were identified and selected using the following criteria. The participants had to be current adult educators who were teaching, facilitating and/or training within various workplace settings. Because I was exploring how the participants’ practice had evolved to incorporate spiritual dimensions of learning within their settings, the participants needed to have at least 5 years experience within the adult education field and at least 3 years adult education experience within their respective workplace settings. In addition, the participants had to come from a variety of workplace settings (i.e. not all from school boards or not all from the private sector) so I could explore their experiences within a variety of organizations. Finally, they had to believe that their practice and their workplace had evolved to incorporate spiritual dimensions and were interested in exploring the impact of this evolution. Below is a summary of the participants chosen for this study.

Pseudonym	Age	Raised in Religious Family	Workplace Setting	Workplace Title
Stephanie	Late 30s	Yes—Christian	Telecommunications Corporation	Team Leader, Employee Wellness
Mick	Mid 40s	Yes—Christian	Electronics Manufacturing Corporation	Internal Consultant and Team Leader
Holly	Mid 50s	Yes—Christian	Insurance and Financial Investments Corporation	Organizational Capability Architect
Erin	Mid 40s	Yes—Christian	Catholic School Board	Faith Formation and Religion Consultant
Danielle	Mid 40s	Minimal—Christian	Non-profit Co-operative Housing	Housing Co-op Co-coordinator

Table 1: The Participants

In order to broaden my understanding of the experiences of my participants within their respective workplace settings, I also gathered data from two or three of the participants' co-workers. Each participant was asked to provide me with a list of names of individuals who represented a cross section of positions and perspectives within their respective workplaces. These colleagues had an opportunity to reflect upon changes within their organizations and how they felt the spiritual dimensions were being addressed within the organization as a whole and through the adult learning opportunities.

The research orientation for this study lies within a qualitative approach as it allows for the exploration and interpretation of our experience. As Eisner (1993) states, "humans are sentient creatures who live in a qualitative world...out of experience concepts are formed...experience, however, is private. For experience to become public, we must find some means to represent it" (p. 7). The term "qualitative approach" is an umbrella for various qualitative methods within interpretist research. Along this continuum, a life history approach most closely aligned itself to my study. According to Measor and Sikes (1992), "life history is perhaps best defined

as ‘sociologically read biography’” (p. 209). Life history places narrative accounts (biographies) and interpretations within in a specific social context.

An important characteristic of the life history approach is that it focuses on depth rather than breadth (Cole and Knowles, 2001). In this inquiry, I engaged with a small number of participants so that I could explore their stories intensively. It was only by going for depth, with a few participants, that I was able to understand the richness of lives lived within their particular social constructs. By interviewing these adult educators within the context of the increasing interest of spirituality within the workplace setting, my analysis was able to move beyond the specific lives of the individuals within this study, to this broader social context.

As mentioned previously, the major source of data in this study was a life history interview with each participant that was audio-taped and transcribed. During these interviews the participants were asked to reflect upon three areas: their experiences as a spiritual person; their experiences as an adult educator and how they connected to their spirituality; and finally how their workplace place setting had evolved to become “more spiritually infused.” They were then asked to integrate all of these areas by reflecting on how they bring their spirituality into the workplace, and to consider its impact on their setting. The style of interview I used allowed me to have “a conversation within a particular subject area, to work questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined” (Patton, 1990, p. 283). This conversational interview style also provided the participants with the opportunity to ask me questions if they wished. As Riddell (1989) points out, “it is an impossible task for the interviewer to establish warmth and trust without revealing anything of her own personality and concerns” (p. 82).

I conducted three to four interviews with each participant, totaling approximately six to eight hours. In addition, I ensured that at least one of the interviews was conducted at their workplace so that I could get an understanding of their setting. While the life history interview was the major source of data in this study, I gathered multiple sources of data in order to ensure that my findings and conclusions were trustworthy. Other sources of data included: 1) interviews with two to three colleagues who work with each participant, 2) document analysis of each organization’s brochures and literature, in order to further understand each workplace context and 3) final interpretive interviews with each participant to mutually explore findings.

The analysis of the data was done on an ongoing basis ongoing throughout this study, as I conducted a preliminary analysis after each interview and follow-up analysis with the increasing amounts of data. I used the process that Plummer (1983) and Wolcott (1994) suggested, which involved continuously reviewing the transcripts, field notes and organizational documents until "it makes sense and feels right and key ideas and themes flow from it" (p. 99). In addition, I conducted checks with the five main participants of this study to increase the validity of the findings. Each participant reviewed their own transcripts and a synopsis of their colleagues' reflections and they articulated themes and issues of significance that emerged for them. Their reflections reinforced my confidence in my initial and ongoing analysis of the data.

Findings

As an introduction to the findings of this study, it is important to note some significant commonalties among participants that were not specific to the criteria for the participant selection. First of all, most of the participants were socialized in a Christian religious tradition. Secondly, all of the participants are white, have a middle-class background, have some post-secondary education and have been born and raised in Canada. In addition, all the participants may be loosely classified as middle-aged, ranging from 38 years to 55 years of age. As a result, some of the similarities in the findings can be attributed to similarities associated to the broader social and cultural circumstances that the participants brought to this study (Tisdell, 2000).

The analysis for study concentrates on three areas: an exploration of the participants' spirituality, what their spirituality means to them in their practice as adult educators within their respective organizations and finally, how they and their colleagues view their respective organizations within a spiritual context.

An Exploration of the Participants' Spirituality

The spiritual experiences and development of the participants reflected a reconnection with the religion of their childhood and then movement beyond this to develop a relevant and meaningful adult spirituality.

From Childhood Religion to Adult Spirituality. The childhood experiences of most of the participants were equated with participation in formal church settings of the Christian faith. Both Stephanie and Erin remembered their families as being highly active in church. Stephanie recollected that her family "was very involved in the church through Sunday

school, and committees in the church. There were always activities—youth group activities, social activities and people calling and dropping in.”

By the time most of the participants were in their teens or in their early twenties they started to question the religious experiences and beliefs they had as children and for many of them this meant leaving the church for a while. For Mick and Stephanie this departure was within the context of the rebellious teenage years. However, Holly and Erin did not experience a shift in their view of religion and their church until they were in their early twenties.

Religion under the Umbrella of Spirituality. Many of the participants reclaimed part of their religious experiences from their childhood and made them part of their adult spirituality. But their adult spirituality is not synonymous with religion. Religion became a piece of their spirituality. Erin described this distinction:

They do intersect, religion and spirituality, but I see spirituality as being the umbrella area and religion falling under that. So in other words, my spirituality is my core relationship, my core beliefs, my meaning I bring to my life, my relationships with self, with others, with my God and religion would be how, in a formal way, I express that.

What many of the participants were attracted to within formal religion were the rituals associated with the church. Mick had been attending a Catholic Church again and described what the rituals meant to him:

If you only think of them as rituals it seems very rote and you're very... you just repeat what you say and it's almost automatic, but when you think about it in terms of the traditions and the symbols and why they are what they are, it is very lovely.

As the participants elaborated about what the umbrella of spirituality meant to them, they described a connection to a higher presence, acknowledging the mysterious and unexplainable and being on an evolving and ongoing journey.

All of the participants spoke about the importance of having a close community of people around them and that part of their spirituality was connected with others. Both Erin and Danielle understood the significance of having strong community support throughout their respective spiritual journeys. Danielle does not take her community for granted because at one point she had a phase when she felt isolated and didn't have a close community. “I felt alone quite a bit in terms of that [spiritual growth]. I still

maintain that I had a good support system in terms of friends but not necessarily within the local community."

Moments of Crisis and Spiritual Connections. Intense spiritual moments were often connected to times of crisis and feeling a higher presence that guided and supported them through this time. These experiences were quite intense and challenging for them personally and yet during this time they felt that they grew and became more connected with their own spirituality. Stephanie had a particularly rough phase in her work and one morning she was unable to go to work. She felt she had been pushed too far and was struggling with how the director ran the department. When she looked back at this time, she felt that the work she did with a coach really helped her and she could now value the experience she went through.

She gave me perspective in my life and part of that was putting me on a wellness path. It was very much a chance and it connected me with my spirituality as far as—I mean I hadn't even looked at my personal values and valued them and challenged them.

Connections with Nature, Creativity and Times of Reflection. As participants reflected on how they intentionally attended to their spirituality, they all talked about the importance of connecting with nature, developing their creativity and setting aside time for themselves. It seems as if they were all striving to use this avenue to become more whole. As Holly stated "I certainly have the sense of the spiritual when I am engaged in those activities (the creative, the art and the painting) and even when I'm around those activities."

Their Role as Adult Educators: Spiritual Grounding

The next component of the findings considers how the participants saw their spirituality affecting them in their roles as workplace adult educators. Holly explains,

This catches me by surprise because one of my pictures of spirituality is that it's a quiet, meditating, peaceful place. I suppose I have two poles around spirituality, one is that and I certainly need that replenishment for my own serenity and peace but then the other pole is this outreach, this proactive attempting to make the world a better place.

In this section, the discussion gradually broadens from the participants' view of themselves in their respective roles as adult educators to the activities and processes they were involved in.

Facilitator of Individual and Group Development. All of the participants, despite various titles and functions, felt their role, as a developer

of individuals and groups was foundational in demonstrating their spirituality at work. Stephanie described this within the context of being a wellness coach. She was there as a support so people could reach their potential. Ultimately, Stephanie saw this work within the context of being a "spiritual advisor" as she and her colleague "looked for opportunities to support people at an individual level, and also influence departments." For Danielle, the development of the individual was empowering them to take responsibility for their own community: the housing co-op. "Your role is to have them actually voice and use their democracy."

The image of guiding individuals so they can determine their own path was something that Erin felt was central to her role. However Erin's role was unique from the other participants' because, not only did she see her role as anchored in her spirituality, the context of her organization expected her spirituality to be overt. For many people within her workplace setting she was their "spiritual advisor."

The next role, advocator of social responsibility, is similar to the facilitator of individual and group development, except that in this role, these adult educators provided support for people by moving against the tide of their workplace or the larger community. They were a contrary voice. All of the participants played this advocator role, though to varying degrees.

Advocator of Social Responsibility. Both Holly and Mick felt that one of the central vehicles for bringing their spirituality into their workplace was in challenging the basic tenets of business practice within a large corporate setting. Mick described this work as he helped facilitate the identification of core values within the company and more recently as he continued to try and ensure that structures were in place to support those values. "This was a real opportunity for us to put a mark on that [the values of the company]." As the company rapidly grew, Mick became very concerned that the "social aspects" of the company were going to be thrown out. He was there to remind them of the social aspects.

Both Mick and Holly struggled with the emotional drain around this role. Holly stated "there are times when it seems overwhelming, when the tension seems too much. I'm exhausted. When the business imperative and the analytical brain seems to overtake me, but who else will stand in that spot and hold the tension that says, no I won't go away?"

Stephanie also works within a corporate setting, but the role of social advocate was not as prominent a role for her. While she indicated that she

would take on this role if necessary, it seemed as if the need for advocacy was not as necessary.

Erin's role as social advocate was also associated with "consciousness raising." However, she also had a unique advocacy role as being an alternative voice in her religious setting. Erin advocated for people's spiritual well-being within the context of the hierarchy and structure of a church:

I think you know whether we are separated or divorced Catholics, whether it is women, whether it is gay persons, it is like you've gotta jump through these hoops and then you're ok with us. Rather than, you know, we honour your experience, we journey with you and away we go and I think it has hurt a lot, a lot of people.

Danielle's role of social advocator in the non-profit housing sector was central to her work and was a little different because of her context. Her setting for advocacy was not only within her specific work place, but it also involved the larger community." As a result, part of her role involved lobbying both within the housing co-op and within the larger community as she participated in "building a community centre, stopping a road being built or lobbying against environmental toxins in the neighbourhood."

Spiritual Language within the Workplace. In closing this section that reflects upon the roles of the participants within their workplace, it is interesting to note that for most of the participants, while they attributed their motivation as being spirituality grounded, they did not name it as "spirituality" within their workplace context. The only exception to this was Erin, who works in a religious context. Holly, Mick and Stephanie, to a limited extent, believed that naming their work as "spiritual" would not be helpful. Mick felt that the "values" work that he had done was "very spiritual in nature" but wouldn't name it as such because "we don't want to scare everybody away." Stephanie indicated that the term "spirituality" wasn't part of the lexicon but "if I pointed it out to him [a manager] he'd be right there and he'd say, "Yes, you're absolutely right," and he would be able to draw upon other examples." Danielle thought much the same way. "Still, even though it's happening, I think it's marginal in terms of actually discussing it."

The final piece in the exploration of the role of the adult educator answers the question "How?" Are there processes and approaches that these adult educators relied upon as they addressed the spiritual dimensions of their organizations?

Spiritual Moments: The Importance of Trust, Open Ended Questions, Honest Dialogue and Storytelling. As the participants reflected upon

spiritual moments, they connected them with activities such as change management, leadership development, identification of organizational values and faith formation courses. They felt that these activities demanded deep reflection and the full engagement of individuals and groups within their organizational context.

Mick remembers the creation of such a spiritual space as he facilitated his organization's "values" sessions. They designed the "values" process by asking one open-ended question. "If you could design this company anyway you wanted and you could describe what it would be like to work here, how would you describe it?" As a result the identification of values was done through dialogue with people at all levels within the organization. Mick indicated that once you begin this process it can be very risky and at times it was rather uncomfortable because it opens up the potential for conflict within the group. Attending to conflict in an open and caring way was a spiritual process that Danielle and Holly named. Danielle stated that there was bound to be conflict in her housing co-op because it was fundamentally a democratic organization and everybody had their own opportunity to voice their opinions.

Responding to that is very difficult in a way. Rather than just coming down and saying you can't do that, it's saying, "Can you see how your actions are affecting the community." What I've tended to do is to try and facilitate that learning and to say, "How can we as a group resolve this issue?"

A process that all participants used as they helped adults learn from each other and "re-find" parts of themselves was storytelling. Erin used storytelling as a central tenet in the Catholic leadership program that she facilitated. She explained that storytelling allowed them to go beyond the intellectual.

Its primary emphasis is on the process, not content and more specifically it is on the process of the individuals who go there reflecting on their own lived experience and their own faith journey. It doesn't stay there, it's not just about me and God but it extends to the commonalities that you find between your own "me" story and the "we" story.

Spiritual Moments: Times of Grace, Breakthroughs, Transformation and Community. There were times within the processes and experiences outlined above when groups led by the participants' slipped into "spiritual moments." When attempting to describe how they were different from "good adult learning experiences" they often found it challenging to find the right

words as they intuitively felt that the experience was difference. The following phrases are a sample of the descriptors they used to describe these moments. "There is a breakthrough, meaning that the masks slip a little and people are more authentic." "People are personally transformed and they see the world differently." "There is a deeper sense of community and connectedness within the group." "People feel they can voice their fears, they can be open and the truth comes out." What was striking about all of the participants is that they could not exactly predict when these moments would occur.

Spirituality Within Each Workplace: The Views of Participants and Their Colleagues

The final component of the analysis puts the spiritual journeys and the work of the participants within the framework of their various organizations. In reviewing the responses of the participants and their colleagues as they described spirituality within the workplace it became apparent that their descriptions affected all aspects of the organization.

They (participants and their colleagues) all emphasized how it important it is to have a sense of vocation and passion about their work. Ideally this passion would be fully expressed in a workplace culture that encouraged creativity and risk taking. Supports that would be in place so that people could be effective would include various training and wellness programs such as leadership programs, board development training, and career development programs. In addition the workplace would demonstrate that it values balance between work and home by having supports and programs in place that foster outside volunteer commitments and the other roles in people's lives. The underlying assumption about providing these supports is that the organization values people and also has base line wages and benefits in place that demonstrate that they are willing to invest in their people.

Spirituality within the workplace also recognizes the importance of a sense of community both within and beyond the workplace. While the participants and their colleagues all appreciated the informal relationships and community they had at work, several indicated that they felt that their organizations were not as intentional as they could be in cultivating community. The challenges of a fast-paced work environment with high demands make this difficult. A sense of community beyond the workplace was described as participation in community charities and in environmental policies and decision-making practices that go beyond looking at the profit margin to considering the impact on the larger community.

Finally, all the participants and their colleagues understood that the transfer of their organization's values into day-to-day practice was probably pivotal in being able demonstrate that spirituality had been infused into the workplace. While all the organizations in this inquiry had undergone the process of articulating values that foster many of the qualities already listed above, the implementation of these values was inconsistent.

The participants and their colleagues were very similar in their views of what a spiritually infused organization was, but there was some variance in each organization's willingness to implement the spiritual dimensions described above. As mentioned previously, this had an impact on the amount of time and energy each participant spent in the role of social advocacy.

Discussion and Conclusions

As I begin to discuss and integrate the findings of this inquiry, I am left with the impression that this is an organic undertaking because of the interdependent nature of the findings. In addition, while the findings of this study offer some interesting insights about the interplay between spirituality and the role of adult educators within the workplace, they do need to be interpreted with some caution. These findings are related to a specific and purposeful sample and cannot be generalized to all adult educators.

A primary finding of this study revealed that the following characteristics enhanced these adult educators in their ability to address the spiritual dimensions of their workplace in a positive and inclusive manner. They had an open, evolving and inclusive perspective about their own and others' spirituality, rather than a perspective that was limited to specific religious view. This in turn helped them to create a culture of spirituality that was more humane and inclusive within their workplace. In addition, they understood that their spirituality was not limited to their personal rituals and time, but they realized that their spirituality was something that had an impact on all aspects of their life, including their work life. When they considered how their spirituality affected their vocation, they brought a sense of social justice to their work as they tried to ensure that their workplaces were places that supported individuals and groups and also operated in a just and ethical manner. The integration of the participants' spirituality with the role of social advocate within their workplaces is similar to the findings in Tisdell's (2000) study. She found that

These participants saw their spirituality and their social justice efforts as an integrated way of life and as a way of thinking and being in the world.

They had a strong sense of mission, fueled by their spirituality, of challenging systems of oppression based on race, class, gender, ability and sexual orientation in their adult education practices. But their involvement in social action efforts also called them back to their spirituality. (p. 328)

This open and inclusive perspective of spirituality evolved and was something that was acquired throughout participants' life journeys. While the fit is not perfect, this changing view can be associated with movement into mid-life, which is the phase of life all of the participants in this study, as well as myself, shared. Fowler (1981) and Weisbust and Thomas (1994) made connections to the mid-life journey, stating, "transforming spiritual development appears to be age-related but not age-determined. That is, it appears more frequently in older persons, but can be found in younger people" (Weisbust and Thomas, p. 132). In addition to the loose correlation with middle age, this type of spiritual journey requires an ongoing ability to be self-reflective and self-aware, qualities I found in all my participants. They were all doing the work that Fenwick and English (2001) recommended: "One place to start is by examining our own biography. For many of us it is important to acknowledge and perhaps reconcile the influence of our religious upbringing on our current spiritual preferences and resistances" (p.7). Ideally then if we as adult educators are open to an evolving and inclusive spirituality, we will then bring a spirituality into our workplaces that is inviting and nurturing toward individuals and groups, but is also challenging and assertive in ensuring that our workplaces model a holistic spirituality.

While the adult educator needs to explore their motivations for addressing the spiritual dimensions of the workplace, the same educator also needs to understand the motivations of their workplace as they move into this area. If an organization sees spirituality as the latest trend or bandwagon or as another way to boost its profits, adult educators within this context should proceed with caution. Mitroff and Denton (1999) cautioned organizations about their motivations for "getting into spirituality" by stating that those who practice spirituality in order to achieve better corporate results undermine both its practice and its ultimate benefits. To reap the positive benefits of spirituality, it must be practiced for its own sake" (p. xviii). As I interviewed the participants and their workplace colleagues I was struck by their all-encompassing view as they moved from individual vocation to the importance of community, workplace balance and ethical and environmental practices. However, while their view was consistent, the implementation of

their ideals varied greatly. As a result, the experiences and practices of adult educators in addressing the spiritual dimensions of their workplace will be informed by the gap between the articulated ideal and the actual reality of their workplace as they challenge organizations to assume a holistic practice in addressing its spiritual dimensions; from treating colleagues as authentic and multi-dimensional people, to ensuring that their workplace has ethical and environmental practices in place.

Against this backdrop, there emerged another type of finding within this inquiry. During conversations with the participants and their colleagues, they narrowed their focus to reflect upon "actual spiritual spaces" they and their groups felt as they led specific workshops and seminars. The participants' reflections on specific "spiritual spaces" within the workplace remind us that the creation of a holistic spiritual culture includes the relational aspects of the organization as well. When the relational of the organization is recognized and brought in, it is recognizing our need to feel interconnected, grounded to the earth and it allows for the more shadowy mysterious experiences that go beyond the analytical and intellectual processes of the outward personality.

With the exception of Erin's environment, which was overly religious, "spiritual spaces" were not intentionally created within the participants' workplace. However, the potential for their occurrence seemed to increase during group events that tapped into the personal stories and areas of the learners' beings that went beyond the logical and rational persona. The emergent connectedness can evoke individual and group transformation. During this time, people may feel profoundly connected to each other and are able to access depths of their being and creativity that are only available through these alternative ways of knowing.

These bright spiritual spaces probe and delve into sensitive and deeper areas of our beings. When I look at these moments both within my practice and within the practice of the other participants I realize how fragile they are. I also realize that as adult educators, we are placing people within our groups in an extremely vulnerable state. Because of this fragility and vulnerability, it is essential to understand the motivations and views of the adult educators and the workplace as they promote spirituality.

In closing, I believe that both I and adult education in general are just at the beginning stages of exploring the experiences and practices of adult educators in addressing spirituality within the workplace. I now understand that part of my motivation in doing this study was connected to my own mid-life journey in exploring my spirituality. I was asking different questions as I

found my old understanding of my spirituality too constraining and limiting. As I listened and learned from the participants in this study I found a great resonance with the stories and the reflections they graciously offered in our conversations. As I began to see how they connected their spirituality to their work lives, I remember experiencing a turning point both within this study and in my spiritual journey. The boundaries and walls I placed around my spirituality and how it connects to my practice as an adult educator within my workplace were pushed back further and ultimately began to crumble. I am grateful to my participants for they have taught me much about having an inclusive view of our spirituality and our work as adult educators. While I realize that there are many pitfalls and the terrain is rough and challenging in linking spirituality with our workplaces, this study, while having its limitations, has inspired hope in me. Through the spiritual pursuit of meaning and connectedness with the universe around us, we in our work as adult educators are ultimately pursuing a society and a workplace that is just, ethical, compassionate and holistic.

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