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The Complex Reasons for Missing Spirituality

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Abstract

This article is written in response to Lingley's (2016) concept of spiritually responsive pedagogy. To begin with, the word *spiritual*, when applied to education, still attracts varied responses. Therefore, I have begun by examining contemporary understandings of spirituality as reflected in current research and literature, which provides an informed context for my response. I follow up by aligning some of the key features noted by Lingley in democratic education and spiritually responsive pedagogy to other perspectives that deal with the spiritual dimension in education; I do this in order to offer a supportive stance to Lingley's assertion that, if we are to address the real needs of our students today and prepare them to meet the challenges of the world of tomorrow, we must incorporate spiritually responsive pedagogy into educational policy and practice.

This article is in response to

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WHEN I WAS asked if I would respond to Audrey Lingley's (2016) article discussing spiritually responsive pedagogy, I was both interested and intrigued to discover just how she understood and conveyed the concept and how it might inform my own and others' work in addressing the spiritual dimension in education. As Lingley noted, spirituality is perceived as a complex concept that usually attracts an array of responses in academia, both positive and negative in terms of how it is being deciphered, and whether or not it has a place in education. Accordingly, I have structured this article into two sections. The first provides a summary of some contemporary understandings of spirituality in order to provide a context for Lingley's definition and my response. The second part examines the proposed concept of spiritually responsive pedagogy and responds directly to the questions raised by Lingley.

Traditional and Contemporary Perspectives on Human Spirituality

From the late 1990s, networks of educators and researchers have grown across the globe who have been grappling with the problem of incorporating a spiritual dimension into educational programs (e.g., Best, 1996; de Souza, Engebretson, Durka, Jackson, & McGrady, 2006). One fundamental issue has been generated by the question: How is spirituality understood in contemporary

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times and how is it translated and reflected in everyday life? This is followed by the question: Does spirituality have a place in education? Lingley (2016) has noted the complications arising from the first question and offered various interpretations from relevant literature to argue that spirituality does have a place within democratic education.

My own response to the first question is to acknowledge that there are distinct problems related to how the concept of spirituality is being understood in both wider and/or more specific applications. I believe this can be attributed to the different perspectives that stem from the religious, secular, and cultural diversity that may be found among the players and theorists in the spirituality dialogue and research. Further, the lack of effective language in the Western world to capture this particular dimension of human experience and expression plays a significant role in creating obscurity rather than transparency.

In the twenty or more years that I have been engaged in research into young people's spirituality and the implications for education, I have been both fascinated and frustrated by the ongoing discourse that continues to emphasize and passively accept the ambiguous nature of spirituality despite the fact that such uncertainty does impact on the credibility of associated research. In general, it has been a common experience for many academics to listen to conference papers on spiritual research that begin by acknowledging the inability of the researchers to define spirituality. They then proceed to explain how spirituality is being understood and applied in their particular project, and we hear words that are commonly used to reflect perceptions of spirituality, such as *awe and wonder, compassion, joy, transcendence, freedom, meaning and purpose, oneness and unity*, and so on. I have observed (de Souza, 2012, 2016) that, in general, these words reflect the individual's response to the inner self or to something outside the self so that they are expressions of human relationality and that for many, spirituality is about the connectedness that an individual experiences toward the Other.¹

In 2015, my efforts to bring some coherence to the discourse led to an edited book where researchers from different disciplines were invited to explain how the concept of spirituality was interpreted in their specific fields. They were also asked to discuss the implications for application and practice. Their writings provide the content of a new publication (de Souza, Bone, & Watson, 2016), and I would like to draw on the findings from the final analytical chapter to present a concept of spirituality which will inform my discussion in this paper.

To begin with, what emerged was that two distinct perspectives on spirituality could be identified wherein the concept of spirituality was usually housed: traditional and contemporary (de Souza & Watson, 2016). The former draws from a variety of faith traditions and is linked to religious beliefs and practices aligned with the search for God, Ultimate Reality, or a Divine Mystery. Here, spirituality is perceived and expressed in the affective dimension of religious activity—such as rites and rituals.

1 I use *Other* as a collective noun that encompasses all others in the human and nonhuman world.

In other words, it is the experiential dimension of religiously active lives. Additionally, there is much emphasis on interiority so that one's inner journey is seen as more important, and sometimes it becomes distanced from the individual's outer, existential life. Ultimately, transcendence and mysticism from a traditional perspective is God-centred.

This traditional perspective of spirituality, I believe, has relevance to Dewey's notion of religiousness that Lingley (2016) used to begin her theorizing. Dewey's theory of democratic education dates from the earlier years of the last century at a time when spirituality in the Western world was often conflated with religion. Dewey distinguished between religion and religiousness (Dewey, 1986, ch. 1), whereby he identified experience as distinct from religious belief. At the time of his writings, Christianity still played an influential role in the lives of many people living in Western societies so that an effort to untangle spirituality from religion was a challenging prospect. It is only at the end of the 20th century, when the power of institutionalized religions declined, that spirituality was more clearly identified as distinct from religiosity, thereby leading to contemporary perspectives. Therefore, while Dewey appeared to be alluding to the spiritual in his treatise on democratic education, we need to note that given the context of his writing, his language remained embedded in a religious framework.

The most apparent difference generated by contemporary perspectives is that spirituality is not necessarily God-related (de Souza & Watson, 2016, p. 345). Further, transcendence is not focused on a divine mystery or divine person but extends to include "an awareness that one is connected to something more, beyond the individual self, but which can be grounded in an existential reality" (de Souza & Watson, 2016, p. 345). Accordingly, at one level, an individual may experience transcendence in traditional terms so that it is God-related. At another level, experiences of transcendence may include emotions and experiences that are inspired by their relationship or response to another person and to truth and beauty in creation, the arts, and so on.

As well, there are differences in the interpretation of the word *sacred*. In traditional terms, sacred is God-related and applies to aspects of religious life such as prayer and liturgy, doctrine, texts, and/or music. In contemporary terms, experiences of deep meaning and sentiment, particular relationships, or indeed, particular activities in the everyday may also be perceived as sacred. These include experiences of transcendence in response to social and community action, creation, art works, and/or connections to the earth and universe that may arouse a sense of unity and oneness. Without doubt, these are experiences that are intrinsic to education and learning, hence, supporting the call for a spiritually responsive pedagogy.

In the end, then, contemporary understandings indicate that spirituality is not reserved for the few who belong to religious traditions. Instead, it is recognized as a shared, innate human trait (Hay, 2006) which is as essential to the wholeness of being as intellectual, physical and emotional attributes. It applies equally to all people, religious and nonreligious (de Souza & Watson, 2016, p. 346). This finding, indeed, provides sound support for Lingley's

argument for a spiritually responsive pedagogy. If spirituality is an innate human quality, its role in educational programs must be recognized and addressed. I shall examine this further in the next section of this article.

Another factor is that organized religion used to be the main avenue, particularly in the Western world, where humans tried to nurture and express their spiritual natures (see Armstrong, 2009; Hay, 2006; O'Murchú, 1997; among others). Such expressions may be described as religious expressions of spirituality. This is quite different to the fact that in today's world, many seekers are finding more holistic ways and means to engage and practise their spirituality so as to encompass the wholeness of their humanity.

A further point that emerged through our analysis (de Souza & Watson), and which is pertinent to this discussion, is that there is, usually, little or no ambiguity attached to the traditional concept of spirituality. Rather, there is a distinct understanding of a transcendent dimension that is God-related, which influences the way one lives one's life. Consequently, it is important to recognize that while human spirituality, in some form or other, may have been recognized from the earliest years of known human existence, the ambiguity that has been identified by Lingley and others is a relatively new phenomenon. From the latter half of the 20th century, as the influence of organized religion dwindled in the Western world so that spirituality began to emerge as something distinct from religion, it appears to have moved into a state of transition. This has involved finding new ways and language to discuss, study, and understand human spirituality as something holistic and essential to the flourishing of human beings.

The above discussion raises some relevant points to consider in light of Lingley's (2016) argument that the tendency to conflate spirituality with religion has provided an excuse for those educators who are resistant to incorporating spirituality in to democratic education. Rather she saw it as "a refusal on the part of members of the dominator class to relinquish epistemological and ontological control" (p. 7). I suggest that the situation is more complex. Until some consensus is reached about a definition of spirituality so that a convincing argument can be offered for its role in education, there will continue to be a certain resistance to recognizing a spiritual dimension in education in western education systems. This is precisely because the beliefs and values of Western culture originated in Western Christianity where, for centuries, the boundaries determining human spirituality and human religiosity became quite blurred. It is not surprising, then, that in countries like the United States, Australia, and others, where there has been a determination to keep religion out of education, spirituality is viewed with suspicion. It is seen as a subtle attempt by religionists to bring religion into education.

The attempts to distinguish between religion and spirituality, as discussed earlier, are a relatively new phenomenon so that the findings of current research are only just beginning to influence thinking and planning in education in some countries. What is important to recognize here is that the Western education system has been influential in many non-Western countries so that the discussion on spirituality and education is not be restricted to the

United States and other Western democratic countries but has applications in a wider, global context.

A further pertinent consideration is that in a world besieged by globalization and plurality, we find a wealth of expressions of contemporary spirituality that reflect the diversity associated with human beliefs, practices, and endeavours, and each has its own integrity and credibility because spirituality comprises both collective and individual elements that compose humankind. Accordingly, no particular form or expression of spirituality, for instance, religious spirituality, may claim to be superior to another, such as secular, humanistic, or indeed, indigenous spirituality. These are challenging issues for all countries, such as Australia and the United States, where societies are composed of people from different regions, cultures, and religions.

Finally, from our investigations, we were able to identify some key traits of spirituality that were unmistakably shared understandings across the many and varied disciplinary voices. This suggested that the transitional process referred to earlier has begun to emerge into a distinct discipline that has both credibility and validity as a field of study, and that can inform and further our knowledge and understanding about the human condition. To conclude, the essence of human spirituality may be recognized as an implicit element in human relationality and it is reflected in experiences and expressions of connectedness that the individual has with the human and, sometimes, the nonhuman world (de Souza, 2016). Certainly, these are the conclusions I have reached in my study of contemporary spirituality, and it is with this understanding that I write my response to Lingley's (2016) notion of spiritually responsive pedagogy.

Spiritually Responsive Pedagogy—Some Considerations

To begin with, I was not surprised by the choice of educators that Lingley (2016) focused on. To ground her thesis within the work of these scholars who have informed research and scholarship in this field over the past century was indeed worthwhile and indicated an interpretation of the notion of spirituality in contemporary terms rather than one that was restricted to traditional terms. Lingley noted that little attention has been given to spirituality in educational discourse at the policy or curriculum development level in the United States, and she attributed this to multiple understandings and applications that prevent clear definitions of the concept. As I have indicated earlier, there are distinct reasons why a spiritually responsive pedagogy has not been at the forefront of action for renewal in educational policies and programs in the United States and other Western education systems. An exception is Britain, where spiritual education has been named and included in curriculum documents for some years (e.g., Office for Standards in Education, 1994; School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 1995). Nevertheless, the subject in Britain continues to pose some problems for practitioners in terms of just how to address and include it in the classroom.

Lingley (2016) argued strongly that democratic educators should engage with a concept of spirituality with the same enthusiasm with which they have engaged with topics in critical social

justice pedagogy. Her arguments have shown that critical social justice education is steeped in human relationality; therefore, it would not be difficult to make appropriate links between spirituality and democratic education.

One important consideration in Lingley's (2016) selection of educators is the respective contexts that influence their writing. For instance, those five scholars drew on a Western cultural worldview, although with distinct variations related to class, culture, and religion. I would add gender, particularly women's voices, to this list and note that Lingley did identify the critical feminist, political perspectives in both Noddings's and Thayer-Bacon's writings. Further, she acknowledged that Noddings, Freire, hooks, and Thayer-Bacon all write from a perspective that draws on and from the voices and situations of marginalized people and asks, "Why does the honest naming of spirituality seem obvious for educators who speak from African, Latina, and indigenous perspectives?" (p. 5). However, she did recognize that critical democratic education and spiritually responsive pedagogy share a common purpose in providing a counter-narrative to the educational practices that "sustain majority culture-based systems of oppression, marginalization, and alienation" (p. 8) since both encourage (a) a reduction in alienation through awareness of interconnection, (b) a strong sense of personal agency through integration of internal navigational feelings with external meaning-systems, and (c) an empowered commitment to a common good for all community members through cultivation of spiritual resources such as compassion and resilience (pp. 20–21).

Certainly, the above points provide some explanation as to why it is among the marginalized in society that voices are raised in a call for an education that engenders a spirituality of care, equality, liberation, and human dignity. Moreover, if we examine current social and political spheres across many parts of the world, we can note the regularity with which we are faced with news headlines related to a particular contemporary form of marginalization—that is, the radicalization of young people, which can often be aligned with their experiences of Islamophobia. These issues are impacting the lives of too many young people across many countries, including the United States, and they offer much weight to the argument that educators should recognize and address the spiritual dimension in democratic education. Accordingly, I would like to take some time to explore the impact of this form of marginalization on young Australians to underscore the importance of spiritually responsive pedagogy which can address these problems. As well, I reemphasize that the issues I discuss about radicalization and Islamophobia are pertinent to many Western countries today where Muslims from different regions make up the population.²

2 The issue of home-grown terrorism has been a major concern, particularly since 9/11. Roy (2004) offered the thesis that the reason young people were attracted to online propaganda from radical Islamic groups was due to the de-territorialization of Islam. Pratt (2015) argued that it is linked to expressions of religious fundamentalism, namely Islamophobia. Other theories examine psychological and sociological causes. The fact remains that, in 2016, home-grown terrorism remains a serious problem for many countries around the globe, and a common factor among the many theories is the lack of integration of young Muslims into the mainstream culture—in other words, it is directly related to issues of belonging and identity.

As I am writing, there is a news report that five young men from Melbourne, all under thirty, have been arrested in Cairns, a town along Australia's far northeast coast. They were heading toward Cape York, from where they planned to travel to Indonesia in a small boat on their way to Syria to join ISIS. The news was featured across television, radio, and print media (e.g., ABC Breakfast on Channel 2, Radio National, and *The Herald Sun* [Viellaris & Mason, 2016]). Such reports are becoming commonplace, and related questions are frequently heard from a bemused and concerned community, such as: What is causing young people to become radicalized, and what can we do, as a nation, to prevent this?

Initially, a general theme underlying public responses blamed the Muslim community and demanded that it was their responsibility to fix the problem. However, as Australians are confronted by ever more instances of radicalized young people, both male and female, more considered and insightful responses have begun to emerge. In particular, it is distinctly worrying when we learn of the very young ages at which some of these young people are being radicalized. In an incident in October 2015, a 15-year-old boy shot and killed a police civilian employee in Parramatta, a suburb of Sydney, and was subsequently shot and killed by the police.³ It appeared that none of the boy's friends at school had any idea of his radicalization because he had never spoken of anything that may have indicated his thinking about his religion or associated views. In discussing the situation, Reid (2015) concluded that this "concealed two things—his own complicity with unspeakable texts, but more importantly the related silencing of different views of the world by conservative forces surrounding schooling" (Reid, 2015, para. 3).

Reid (2015) also reported on the findings from a research study involving Years 9 and 10 students (14–16-year-olds), where the objective had been to explore and document through youth voices the causes of youth tensions in a context of rapid social change. She confirmed that for many students the dominance of a certain culture made others feel inferior to that group and argued that while it may seem counter-intuitive from a conservative perspective—that 'touchy subjects' ought to be repressed because

The following websites provide an insight into the spread of the problem and how different countries are attempting to deal with it. Significantly, while belonging and identity are elemental factors in the relationality of the human person and, therefore, human spirituality, there is little evidence that this is being recognized as, perhaps, one aspect of the problem:

- <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3671824/Unmasked-Gun-toting-Jihadi-bride-maker-grooms-British-girls-ISIS-fighters-Syria-student-London-father-successful-businessman.html>
- <http://www.globalsecuritystudies.com/Bizina%20Youth-AG.pdf>
- <http://www.e-ir.info/2016/02/11/understanding-youth-radicalization-in-the-age-of-isis-a-psychosocial-analysis/>
- <http://theconversation.com/australias-response-to-youth-radicalisation-can-benefit-from-a-look-to-overseas-49492>
- <http://www.cfr.org/religion/europes-angry-muslims/p8218>

3 Another incident involved a 15-year old British boy in a terrorist plot with other young adult Australians he had met on social media (Miller, 2015).

they are dangerous—not dealing with valid concerns that young people have, whether radicalization or other matters, means that it is hard to make schools relevant in the totality of their lives. (final paragraph)

Significantly, the silencing of different worldviews that Reid (2015) spoke of plainly reflects Lingley's (2016) discussion of how there is little place within the dominant discourse in education for certain topics that don't quite fit a framework driven by "Western male epistemic privilege" (p. 1). This is particularly the case for migrant countries like Australia, but it is equally applicable in today's world for other Western countries that have experienced their homogenous societies transform in a relatively short space of time into communities characterized by cultural and religious diversity. In such circumstances, we need to realize the inadequacies of an education system—which is founded on Anglo-European philosophies, middle-class values, and the ideals of late 19th- and early-20th-century education—for today's students.

The issues linked to radicalization that keep appearing in our daily news coverage undoubtedly have relevance for this discussion, since they relate to issues of identity, belonging, meaning, and purpose—in other words, elements that reflect the spiritual nature of individuals. I have discussed elsewhere and at length (de Souza 2014, 2016) the problems of fundamentalism and how probable it is that radicalization has been generated by Islamophobia, both of which are examples of extremist, exclusive worldviews. As well, I have shown how they have led to a loss of identity and belonging on the part of young Australian Muslims who have grown up as Australians but against a backdrop of Islamophobia, which dominated political discourse in the first decade of this century. At another level, they have engendered experiences of fear and distrust of the otherness of the Other in the case of many non-Muslim Australians, leading to a rejection of the different Other. Needless to say, when young people experience rejection, they are prone to becoming alienated and feeling displaced. This makes them susceptible to online propaganda that promises to provide them with a sense of identity in, belonging to, and acceptance within another community. Moreover, the fact that this global community is one that is scathing of the values of the Western society that has rejected them in the first place makes it even more attractive. It affirms them in their feelings of anger and betrayal and promotes a sense of shared purpose to retaliate. Thus, what I have identified here are the elements in human spirituality that affect connectedness, that is, the sense of belonging and identity and the fear of those who are different. I believe in today's world these are issues that urgently require a spiritually responsive pedagogy that will espouse the qualities Lingley (2016) cited from Thayer-Bacon:

a relational, pluralistic democratic pedagogy navigates—and even leverages—the tensions of pluralism through classroom practices that reflect shared responsibility, encourage shared authority, and value shared identities. (p. 6)

Also pertinent to this specific situation is Lingley's (2016) definition of spiritual development for a pedagogical framework, which, she argued, should complement traditional models of

human development. She described spiritual development as a multidimensional process incorporating: (a) a disposition of genuine or authentic inquiry, (b) an engagement in a search for purpose and meaning, (c) an orientation of faith in regards to something larger than or beyond oneself, (d) a capacity for self-aware consciousness, (e) an interest in ethical relations and behaviors, and (f) the experience of awe, love, wonder, and transcendence (p. 23).

My first comment on the two extracts cited above is that we find a collection of words that are commonly used to express the perceptions of spirituality that I referred to earlier. These descriptions border on traditional understandings of spirituality with references to "an orientation of faith" (which I interpret as linked to a belief system). Nevertheless, they also cross over to more contemporary understandings, whereby there is a distinct implication that spirituality is a response to something other than self. This includes a response to the inner self, as in "self-aware consciousness," and a response to the Other in terms of "moral and ethical relations" and "experiences of awe, love, wonder and transcendence." This is important if we are to discuss spiritually responsive pedagogy in democratic education that will be relevant for today's students in the United States and elsewhere. It is my understanding that the role of religion in the United States may be rather different to other Western countries like Australia—that is, religion has a significant role in American culture. Instead, in Australia, there is a well-defined, thriving secular culture where religion is often relegated to the fringe, and many young people do not involve themselves in religious practice. Therefore, a traditional perspective, where spirituality is used interchangeably with religiosity, would have less applicability to the lives of many students in Australia and other western countries that share similar secular traits. Alternatively, if spirituality is framed in relational terms, it immediately becomes a significant factor for all students in their everyday. It would also mean that a spiritually responsive pedagogy must involve and address the relational lives of children so as to enhance the connectedness they experience (a) in the process of learning, (b) in response to the learning environment, and (c) in the growth of their knowledge and awareness of the Self⁴ and of the Other (element of spiritual development).

Moreover, while I agree with Lingley (2016) that spirituality and spiritual growth distinctly deal with human relationality, I do have some hesitation with the concept of spiritual development. Developmental theories very often focus on an age-correlated linear process, in one form or another, which may not apply to spiritual growth. Spiritual growth can involve positive and negative experiences, which can either advance the individual into spiritual maturation or cause them to retreat, become introverted, and live in the shadows (de Souza, 2012). This implies a forward-and-backward movement that is neither age-specific nor developmentally progressive. Therefore, I believe it is more helpful to discuss spiritual growth without aligning it to developmental theories or, indeed, to the rather reductive concepts of spirituality that may be found in some areas of positive psychology.

4 *Self* here refers to the inner "self," as distinct from the outer "self?"

Further, I strongly contend that if spirituality, as the essence of human relationality, forms the basis upon which learning activities, resources, and learning environments are designed, they will provide students with opportunities to engage with, learn with/ from, and respond to/with the Other. As well, this will encourage them to feel some empathy and compassion for the Other. It is only through genuine interaction and engagement that indifference or, worse, rejection of the Other can move through to understanding, acceptance, and inclusion. Such a process should further extend students' and teachers' self-knowledge and perception, which reflect Thomas Merton's thinking: "I must look for my identity not only in God but in other[s]" (cited in Del Prete, 2002, p. 165). As well, it should help them to reach a space of spiritual maturity, where they may be enabled to transcend their own anxieties, fears, and disappointments and, potentially, experience a sense of oneness with the Other. Again, this reflects Merton's thinking, encapsulated in the words: "To be what we are requires that we realize our oneness, our existence in an 'original unity'" (Del Prete, citing Merton, 2002, p. 165).

Practices such as these will certainly accommodate Lingley's (2016) first and second principles for spiritually responsive pedagogy: they situate the learner's spiritual development within a holistic framework of human growth, and afford integration of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that is invitational of spiritual ways of knowing and enhancing spiritual growth.

The last two principles identified by Lingley (2016) relate to teacher preparation and education: an acknowledgement of spirituality as part of the teaching and learning process; holistic accountability, which captures the responsibility of democratic educators to integrate spiritual aspects of teaching and learning in classrooms to support critical social justice goals.

Here, Lingley (2016) correctly discerned the importance of the structures and processes related to teacher education as a vital point in any education system. For instance, Tucker and Stronge (2005) identified qualities of effective teachers, based on research,⁵ and asserted:

We now know empirically that these effective teachers also have a direct influence in enhancing student learning. Years of research on teacher quality support the fact that effective teachers not only make students feel good about school and learning, but also that their work actually results in increased student achievement. Studies have substantiated that a whole range of personal and professional qualities are associated with higher levels of student achievement. For example, we know that verbal ability, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, certification status, ability to use a range of teaching strategies skillfully, and enthusiasm for the subject characterize more successful teachers. (para. 2)

The same revelations can be found in an Australian document published by the NSW Office of Education on effective teachers for effective learning where there is a distinct articulation of the role of

⁵ They based their assumptions on the research reported by Darling-Hammond (2000) and Stronge (2002).

the teacher in producing excellent students learning outcomes (see Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2016). In fact, Lingley's (2016) last principle went further, to suggest that preservice teacher preparation needs to raise knowledge and awareness of the spiritual aspects of learning so that classroom practitioners will be better placed to implement spiritually responsive pedagogy. Too often, this is an area that receives little attention in teacher education programs, and with Lingley, I believe that if we are to prepare teachers to be effective educators in democratic education for the 21st century, we need to acknowledge the spiritual dimension in democratic education.

Conclusion

In general, then, I found much of interest in Lingley's (2016) thesis and her exegesis of relevant theorists in which to ground her work. I agree with her that the role of spirituality in education continues to be problematized because of multiple interpretations and understandings, which, in turn, are influenced by the plurality of beliefs and cultures that are features of most contemporary societies in the West. I have argued that the causes for the neglect of spirituality in education are more complex than Lingley asserts. Nevertheless, I offer hope for researchers and educators because we appear to be moving out of the state of transition that has caused levels of ambiguity in the discipline of spirituality (de Souza & Watson, 2016). This is primarily because contemporary research has enabled us to identify common features and a unity of purpose in our varied understandings of the holistic nature of spirituality.

More important, I also feel that current and ongoing study and research need to be extended so that additional factors are considered in the design of an approach to spiritually responsive pedagogy. For instance, attention needs to be given to the needs and aspirations of today's students whose lives are in a constant state of flux wherein they are being affected by rapidly changing societal and political conditions. This includes not only those who are experiencing marginalization, for whatever reasons. Rather, it includes those who belong to the mainstream in society and who, depending on which voices are the most strident in the public arena, find themselves with shifting attitudes toward the Other who is different. To be sure, if the principles of democratic education are aligned with spiritually responsive pedagogy, we will have an education system that is more holistic in nature, one where every student is encouraged to recognize their connectedness to the Other. This will raise their potential to transcend attitudes and behaviors that are driven by the fear of the otherness of Other, and, instead, they may learn to appreciate and/or develop a sense of unity with the Other.

A final word relates to my general impression of Lingley's (2016) thesis. I believe it was focused very much on the American system of education with implications for further research and educational practice in the United States. Nonetheless, I do believe that there are many aspects of American education that intersect with education systems in other Western countries as well as non-Western countries that have been influenced by Western educational philosophies and practice. Therefore, Lingley's arguments do have applications for curriculum and pedagogy at a global level.

I also believe that it will be affirming for educators to discover that there is unity and much to share in matters relating to the spiritual in human endeavors across culture, religion, and race. This is despite the very obvious differences that reside at the surface and that act as sources of distraction to discourage the casual observer from a deeper examination of what lies hidden. Ultimately, we must provide an education for the children of today so that they will be better able to embrace the wholeness of being in all its diversity as they become the citizens and decision makers of tomorrow. Therefore, educators need to pay heed to Lingley's (2016) thesis alongside those of others who are striving to bring spirituality in education to the attention of policymakers, curriculum writers, parents, and the general public.

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