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Field-Based Analysis**

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What is This?

Spirituality as a Discarded Form of Organizational Wisdom: Field-Based Analysis

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Abstract

In this article, we examine what really happens when spirituality enters profit organizations. We suggest looking at workplace spirituality as a form of organizational wisdom. When surveyed, managers and consultants attested that spirituality improved their awareness at work, enhanced communication, and reduced stress. Yet our results show that workplace spirituality suggests alternative ways of thought and behavior that organization members perceive as threatening and thus reject or discard. The chief clash is related to assumptions about social order and social relationships. Our work adds value to translation research by giving more significance to the impact of core organizational ideas in the encounter with new wisdom. We also contribute to workplace spirituality literature and to the emerging field of organizational wisdom by analyzing the initial stages and essence of the encounter between existing and new wisdom.

Keywords

organizations, spirituality, organizational wisdom, translation

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Workplace spirituality is most often defined as workers seeking connectedness in their work community and exploring their inner selves. Some authors extend the notion to say that workplace spirituality is about interconnectedness not only with other people but also with the environment and with all things in the universe (Comer, 2008). Over the past decade, workplace spirituality has received increasing attention. The burgeoning interest in workplace spirituality can be seen as mirroring a broader social trend (Oswick, 2009).

The vast majority of the foundational work, both academic and popular, is concerned with the study of beneficial outcomes and generally considers the phenomenon a positive development (Lips-Wiersma, Lund, & Fornaciari, 2009). Yet the argument that spirituality has a positive impact on the organization is more descriptive then empirical. There is surprisingly very little field-based research. Our work focuses on the actual encounter between spirituality and profit organizations. Our initial research questions were "How does spirituality enter profit organizations?" and "How do managers and consultants perceive and evaluate spirituality?" We found that on the individual domain, managers (and consultants) attested that spirituality improved their awareness at work, improved communication, and reduced stress.

We suggest looking at spirituality to draw insights regarding the introduction of new ideas and practices into organizations. Our theoretical discussion draws on concepts and understandings from the organizational wisdom (OW) literature. More specifically, we claim that spirituality is a form of such wisdom. Indeed, we found that for managers spirituality was constructed as both *individual wisdom* and *organizational wisdom*. Yet managers who embrace spirituality might suffer embarrassment and deterioration of their image at work. Thus, at this stage, workplace spirituality is *perceived* as organizational wisdom, but *it is not accepted* as such.

It seems that workplace spirituality suggests alternative ways of thought and behavior that are perceived as threatening and are thus rejected or marginalized. The main clash is related to assumptions regarding social order and social relationships. From the case of spirituality, we learn that when there are significant gaps between the new wisdom and the existing wisdom, it is most likely that the new wisdom will be adopted only by a few, as *individual wisdom,* with little impact on the environment. These findings challenge earlier research that demonstrated the importance of translation efforts to the introduction of new ideas into organizations (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). Based on our research, we suggest that it is not enough to look at translation. There are at least two other chief variables that may have an impact on the successful implementation of new ideas in organizations. The first is the extent to which this new wisdom addresses the various domains of the organization. The second

is the extent to which this new wisdom is related to the organization's core values. Thus, successful implementation depends not only on the agents' translation efforts but also on the fundamental nature of the new wisdom, the existing organizational wisdom, and the actual gap between them. In light of these claims, we argue that spirituality is a discarded form of organizational wisdom.

New Age and Workplace Spirituality

Spirituality and New Age thought can be considered a network of ideas and practices. The term *New Age* refers to the spiritual movement that emerged in the early 1970s in the West. The message of the New Age is hope for personal transformation, which can be achieved through body work, spiritual disciplines, natural diets, and renewed human relationships (Hanegraaff, 1998).

Spirituality and New Age practices have found their way out of monasteries and ashrams as well as the domain of Western nonwork activities and thought and into mainstream Western institutions such as profit and nonprofit organizations (Zaidman, Goldstein-Gidoni, & Nehemia, 2009). The growth in the recognition and popularity of spirituality in the domain of work is manifested in a variety of ways (Oswick, 2009). More than 70 books on spirituality and management and spirituality and organizational life have appeared recently. Most are of a practical nature, describing how different spiritual traditions can be or should be used at work (Barnett, 1985; Benefiel, 2003; Carroll, 1998; Frost & Egri, 1994; Oswick 2009; Ray & Myers, 1986). These texts frame spirituality as a means to management ends. In particular, self-help and spiritual leadership texts foreground spirituality as a potential source of enhanced personal effectiveness and/or improved organizational performance (Oswick, 2009). In addition, there are gurus who teach and coach new approaches and consultants who make efforts to "package" spirituality and introduce it into organizations (Zaidman et al., 2009).

Workplace Spirituality Research

To date, workplace spirituality has been taken to be a "win-win-win": good for the employee, good for the employee's coworkers, and good for the organization (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009). Studies that follow this line of research can be divided into two main areas: exploratory and consequential models. Exploratory frameworks mainly aim at relating workplace spirituality to certain theoretical, philosophical, cultural or scientific paradigms, whereas consequential models focus on positive outcomes at the organizational and

individual levels, disregarding the specific context (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2007). Yet management literature assumes an attitude–behavior link; how one feels about spirituality personally will manifest in workplace behaviors. Thus, for example, the leadership literature tends to be normative, and it does not provide empirical support for a link between spiritual leadership practices or orientations and positive organizational outcomes (Fornaciaria & Dean, 2009).

A second direction in the research includes a minority of voices that argue that instead of being helpful, workplace spirituality may be in fact harmful, particularly to the employees' well-being, as it may be used as a negative force for gaining hegemony (Bell & Taylor, 2003; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009).

Scant attention has been paid to the actual encounter between the different actors in the field. In a rare example of such observation, Lips-Wiersma and Mills (2002) suggest that employees feel unsafe about expressing spirituality in workplace settings. In another study conducted at the headquarters of a health care system, it was found that spirituality is reinforced by the leader's modeling and that one of the challenges of its incorporation has to do with the communication of context-specific values (Delbecq, 2010).

Workplace Spirituality as a Form of Organizational Wisdom

Organizational wisdom is said to involve the collection, transference, and integration of individuals' wisdom and the use of institutional and social processes (e.g., structure, culture, and leadership) for strategic action (Kessler, 2006). Birren and Fisher (1990) define wisdom as "the integration of the affective, conative, and cognitive aspects of human abilities in response to life's tasks and problems. Wisdom is the balance between opposing valences of intense emotion and detachment, action and inaction, knowledge and doubts" (p. 326). Similarly, Ardelt (2000, 2004) proposes that wisdom essentially comprises integrative dynamics resulting from the synthesis of cognitive (knowing and comprehending), reflective (perspective and introspection), and affective (compassion and empathy) dimensions.

Kessler and Bailey (2008) structured *The Handbook of Organizational and Managerial Wisdom* to include four primary levels of analysis: individual, interpersonal, organizational, and strategic. The handbook is thematically divided into the five primary philosophical branches: logic, ethics, aesthetics, epistemology, and metaphysics. What is new in organizational research is the discussion of epistemology, the origin, nature and limits of human knowledge, and metaphysics, the study of the ultimate reality and what constitutes the structure and content of what exists as real. The latter includes discussions of

ontological, theological, and cosmological problems—issues that traditionally have not been part of the organizational discourse.

Workplace spirituality content overlaps at least three areas of organizational wisdom: ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Several scholars suggest a link between spirituality and organizational wisdom. Bierly and Kolodinsky (2007) discuss executive wisdom, which needs to include deep reflection about past experience as well as ethics and the common good. The authors argue that leaders need to advocate organizational spirituality and balance to establish organizational wisdom. Chia and Holt (2007) discuss the ability of people and organizations to learn. They focus on emptiness—a common premise in Eastern philosophy—as a way of knowing. Another link is suggested by Driver (2007), who proposes focusing on spirituality as a response to a crisis of meaning in organizations. In addition to this overlap in content domain, we found that the discourse about organizational wisdom includes definitions, language, and arguments similarly to the discourse (and practice) of workplace spirituality. Based on the literature above and on our interpretation of the field-based data, we suggest looking at workplace spirituality as organizational wisdom. The texts that consultants use and produce (Comer, 2008; Oswick, 2009) as well as the basic assumptions, practices, and language of workplace spirituality (Zaidman et al., 2009) are sufficiently comprehensive to be regarded as organizational wisdom.

Organizational wisdom, however, is usually perceived in the literature as a collective and interactive process. Staudinger (1996) suggests that wisdom may be considered a phenomenon that has a higher likelihood of being observed when multiple minds are interacting. Barge and Little (2002) introduce dialogical wisdom as a form of phronesis, or practical wisdom, that takes into consideration the multiple perspectives of organization members via the process of conversation. In the following, we demonstrate that workplace spirituality is not acted as a collective or interactive process in organizations. We also show that workplace spirituality is not acted as a "practical wisdom" that takes into consideration the perspectives of the organization's members. These two features of workplace spirituality that we identified through our research attest to our argument that at present workplace spirituality is a discarded form of organizational wisdom.

The Israeli Context

Our research was conducted in Israel among consultants and managers who have had experience with workplace spirituality. Although the specific context might have had some influence on organizational practices and wisdom, we

believe that since Israeli profit organizations are secular, the dynamics and the situations that are presented and discussed in this article can be applied to similar organizations throughout the Western world.

The general Israeli context seems to be highly saturated with manifestations of New Age spirituality (Simchai, 2007; Tavori, 2007). Since the 1990s, the New Age movement has seen increasing participation. There are hundreds of local New Age groups, and the number of people who relate to or participate in New Age activities or rituals has been estimated as hundreds of thousands (Tavori, 2007, p. 10). New Age ideas and practices also have been incorporated into typical mainstream institutions such as the Israeli public medical services, which have seen tremendous growth in the incorporation of complementary and alternative medicine (Fadlon, 2005), as well as in the public education system, which recently tends to include "alternative" activities such as yoga and other spiritual practices (Drori-Dolev, 2006).

While it is certainly difficult to locate the sources of all the New Age practices in Israel, it is safe to assume that some have been imported from the United States and Europe, whereas others reflect the more direct impact of Eastern philosophies and religions such as Hinduism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Yet, like any other global phenomenon, Israeli spirituality has its local flavor. "Glocalism" (Robertson, 1995) is observed in various ways. For example, although it is hard to define mainstream Israeli organizations as religious, when interacting with mainstream institutions, initiators of spirituality tend to take into account the cultural importance of Judaism. Thus, the organizers of New Age festivals are careful to relate to core Jewish practices such as the observance of Jewish holidays. They also avoid including what can be considered "foreign or pagan elements" in ceremonies that are held during such widely popular festivals (Simchai, 2007). Similarly, unlike New Age shops in other countries like New Zealand, Israeli shops do not contain objects or serve as a platform for rituals that are perceived as forbidden by Judaism (Zaidman, 2007a, 2007b). We believe that this cautious position toward the Jewish religion does not necessarily imply religiosity but rather reflects a practical attitude of respect and a more entrepreneurial understanding of the marketing value of so-called Jewish practices.

Another relevant context is the specific area of Israeli profit organizations. Current research does not provide a coherent profile of the issues that are relevant to our work. In an earlier research, we found that the Israeli organizational field has gradually been exposed to spiritual and New Age ideas, but the influence of these ideas is marginal (Zaidman et al., 2009). The results of another study show that "rationality" and "progress" are the wider systems of

meaning within the discourse of Israeli high-tech organizations, and these were borrowed from generic Israeli meaning systems. High-tech organizations do not borrow the religious system of meaning, and in fact they are secular (Zilber, 2006).

Method

This article is part of a larger qualitative research project focusing on the incorporation of spirituality into mainstream Israeli institutions. Adhering to the principles of interpretive qualitative research, we have studied the impact of and resistance to spirituality as well as its construction in its "natural setting" and have attempted "to make sense, or interpret" these topics based on the meanings that the social actors give to their own thoughts and actions (see Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). We also grant a significant role to what anthropologists refer to as "contexts," that is, sets of connections construed as relevant to a particular phenomenon (Dilley, 1999).

We used a combination of several qualitative methods, including interviews, document analysis, website analysis, and observation, to produce a more complete and contextual portrait of the object under study. We collected the data in Israel in 2005 and 2006.

Interviews

We conducted interviews with 23 consultants, 2 yoga teachers who work in organizations, and 11 managers.

We used several methods to find the relevant consultants. We reviewed advertisements in New Age magazines, found information in newspaper articles that focused on spirituality, and searched the web. Our sample of consultants and yoga teachers covers the main actors in the field, which is rather small.

Participants' ages ranged from 35 to 60, although most of them were between 45 and 55.

Their professional biographies showed that they had been exposed to both formal and informal ways of learning. More than half of our participants had an academic background, most of them in some aspect of psychology. Others had degrees in business administration, law, and engineering. The spiritual education of our interviewees was acquired in various ways. Most had been involved in a variety of workshops and training programs, covering topics such as yoga, meditation, coaching, Buddhism, and psychotherapy. They

obtained this training from various institutions, from monasteries to sport colleges, and in different locations (e.g., India, Israel, Korea, the United States, and the Netherlands). More knowledge was typically acquired through books. Participants mentioned books about emotional intelligence, energy, management theory, and combat doctrine.

We also conducted interviews with managers representing a diverse range of organizations in terms of size (both small and big companies) and sector (both high-tech and low-tech). All but one—a city government—were private profit organizations (see Appendix A). We are aware of a slight bias that may have affected the results of our interviews with managers as we approached about half of them through references from the consultants we interviewed. It is feasible that the consultants assumed that these managers had had positive experiences.

Procedure

We conducted in-depth, semistructured interviews individually with each participant. The purpose of the interview was to gain an understanding of the participant's perspectives on workplace spirituality as practiced in each organization. We asked several standard questions, but we also let the interviewees raise more topics, which resulted in further questions (see Appendix B). All interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

We used Atlas.ti computer software for text analysis. The first step was to go over each interview and code its content based on a list of codes. The initial list contained several topics, such as spirituality and impact. During this process, the coders added more codes that appeared important to the analysis, such as impediments and resistance. The coders reviewed each interview and assigned a code or several codes to several sentences or a whole paragraph. The output came in the form of several lists of quotations, which were analyzed to discover major themes or arguments. For each list, we selected a representative quotation to demonstrate the participant's main theme.

As a final step, we reread all the original interviews in full.

Document Analysis

More data on the perspectives of consultants and especially about the ways in which they wish to present their views was gathered through reading and analysis of articles that they wrote. A doctoral dissertation in which one of the consultants introduced his ideas was also scrutinized. We usually tried to

review the material before our meetings with each person and thus were able to develop a common background during the interview or conversation.

Website Analysis

Many of the consultants we studied have websites where they publicize and explain the spiritual consultancy services they offer. We scanned these websites while giving special attention to ideas and statements about goals or results of the specific practice (e.g., a process, course, or workshop). We documented the content of their arguments about the impact of spirituality as well as its "form" (i.e., the language and metaphors that they use).

Participant Observation

To get a general understanding of the field, the first author participated in a large number of activities associated with spirituality in Israel, such as introductory and promotional lectures, meditation retreats and festivals, and a workshop for consultants at the 2004 annual conference of the major Israeli organization for consultants.

Results

How Does Spirituality Enter Organizations?

Spiritual consultants are typically called to help organizations at times of unsatisfactory performance. These are usually described in terms of periods of very hard work, tensions, or significant declines in profits. Consultants may also be invited to deliver a workshop or a lecture as part of the organization's leisure activities.

Spiritual consultants provide a variety of advisory services comprising organizational guidance and coaching for managers. They also deliver lectures, workshops, and courses that carry titles including "Choosing From the Heart," "Personal Responsibility," "Stretch Your Team," "Work–Life Balance," "Listening," "Self-Discovery," and "A World Without Judgment." Workshops often include physical activities adapted from "Eastern" spiritual practices such as yoga, chi kung, or tai chi as well as meditation exercises and other kinds of movements and voice exercises.

Spiritual consultants use various means to present or promote their consultancy "products." These means of promotion usually include extensive use of

the Internet as well as the general media, especially newspapers and popular magazines, to publish texts written by or about them. In this public sphere and especially on their own websites, consultants seem to employ a "utilitarian vocabulary." They often refer to practicality or describe spirituality as a "tool" for "impact," "efficiency," "results," "economic clarity," or "applicability." An example is a course that intends to improve participants' ability to assess their decisions in general, including those related to their work and business. Metaphors borrowed from the world of technology are also common. Thus, in their efforts to turn ideas into practices, or to "materialize ideas" (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996) into lectures, workshops, and the like, the consultants amalgamate language, values, expectations, and practices from the New Age, such as concepts of self-expression, quality of life, and empowerment (Harman, 1996; Inglehart, 1971; Karakas, 2009). Consultants also tend to make use of terms such as *impact*, *efficiency*, and *results*, which can be considered as core ideas of the existing organizational wisdom. We see this process as an attempt to *translate* spirituality to make it more relevant and approachable (see also Zaidman et al., 2009). In the private sphere, however, consultants communicate differently; they make an intensive use of the language and discourse of the New Age.

How Do Managers Perceive and Evaluate Spirituality?

The new wisdom is translated and delivered to top managers. As indicated in workplace spirituality research (see above), they perceive spirituality and spiritual practices in positive terms.

Our data from interviews with managers show three major claims about the impact of spirituality. The first concerns *awareness*, the second relates to *communication,* and the third is about *reducing stress*. These three aspects are often interrelated, and it seems hard for the managers who have experienced spiritual practices to distinguish among them.

Consultants often emphasize inner reflection, which is usually related to the participants' relationship with the world around them. Amos,[1] a development manager in a high-tech company, clearly expressed his understanding of this relationship when he explained, "Zen is a process of transformation which people experience. It has an impact first on them and later maybe it radiates on to their surroundings." When talking about his own experience, Amos said that following the process he has more patience to complete the manual work that he previously hated.

Iris, a human resource manager in a high-tech company, offered an additional perspective with regard to the process of developing awareness and its

impact on the person's surroundings. Iris participated in a workshop in which the focus of the reflexive process was put on the participants' professional choices. Like Amos, she reported a positive impact. Naturally, whereas Amos perceived improvements in performing his tasks as a software developer, Iris talked about the improvement in her contacts with other employees. As she explained, "It helped me to touch the people that I work with . . . to speak to an extremely frustrated manager and to better understand him and the situation."

Improved communication was another positive impact reported by managers, who often associate it with subsequent improvement in other aspects of their work. Ezra, a manager in a low-tech factory, reported that his communication style had changed. Bluntly putting it, he said, "In the past I could break a person into pieces, but today even if someone curses me, I smile." He also claimed that he is more balanced and careful when making decisions. Ezra related both aspects of his "new" behavior to what he gained through the spiritual process, which he said gave him "peace of mind" and made him think "in a different way."

Managers also discussed the impact of spiritual practices on group communications. Meir, a senior manager in an engineering company, explained that following the intervention, managers in his company started breaking down the distance from their employees. Similarly, the director of a social services organization who participated along with other 50 managers in a workshop delivered by a well-known consultant asserted that the workshop had a positive impact on communication and on people's abilities to be open and authentic. More specifically, he suggested that it taught managers to "get rid of the masks."

Finally, managers talked about the impact of spirituality in reducing pressure or enabling more efficient work in a stressful environment. Shira, a manager of a team of 15 people in a high-tech company, said,

> You see, in my field of work the changes are so fast and there is a very high competition. There is a lot of stress and managers' expectations are very high. Following these workshops, I have learned to function in a more relaxed way under these stresses. I empower my employees and teach them to focus on successes and self-awareness. [Following the workshops] I form good teams which work much better. I call it efficiency and focus. I do not call it spirituality.

One CEO also reflected about his gain from several consulting meetings and some other spiritual practices he undertook outside the organization, like

reiki. His lesson from these practices was "how to [be able to] get loose and how to accept things in the right proportion." He added, "With the tools that I have acquired, I can empower the organization, reduce tensions in meetings and be more effective in interviewing people."

Managers discussed the impact of spirituality largely in terms of a self-reflective/awareness process. Nevertheless, they always also mentioned practical tools. So, it is possible to divide managers' responses into two main types. The first emphasizes "process," whereas the other highlights "tools." The process approach reflects a more philosophical attitude to spirituality. It underscores deep listening and awareness of one's nature as a human being and of the nature of reality, which is often portrayed as constantly changing. The right way to accommodate this reality is by understanding its nature and by developing a peaceful inner self. Buddhist and Tao thought are often the sources of this approach. However, the term *tools* refers to exercises such as yoga or breathing and to more specific instructions regarding how to behave in a specific situation (e.g., listening). With these tools, one can develop peace of mind or awareness.

Our findings support earlier research about the potential benefits of workplace spirituality. Some authors suggest that spiritual transformation is important in and of itself, whereas others claim that spirituality contributes positively to organizational performance (Benefiel, 2003; Butts, 1999; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Konz & Ryan, 1999; Neck & Milliman, 1994). It has been argued that spirituality can enhance intuitive abilities, increase innovation, enhance teamwork and employees' commitment, and further facilitate a more powerful vision (Biberman & Whittey, 1997; Henson, 1991; Neck & Milliman, 1994). The very few empirical studies on the topic offer some evidence of increased organizational effectiveness and communication (Benefiel, 2005; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Duerr, 2004; Milliman, Ferguson, Trickett, & Condemi, 1999).

Our findings show that managers perceive spirituality as both individual and organizational wisdom. In the accounts presented above, spirituality is discussed as an "inner change," that is, a process that changes the individual's perceptions, emotions, and behavior (Fox, 1998). They show that the managers' "inner-change processes" reflect a deep transformation rather than a mere surface adjustment.

Inner change is manifested in the systems of human existence that comprise the cognitive element, the emotional element, and the behavioral element (Fox, 1998). Our data demonstrate that for the majority of the participants, the change is manifested positively and in all three aspects of their existence. We argue that the managers perceive the values and practices of spirituality as a source for their own transformation. This transformation is constructed as

individual wisdom—integrating affective, cognitive, and reflective aspects of their personality in response to their work's tasks and problems (Ardelt, 2000, 2004; Birren & Fisher, 1990). However, based on participants' accounts, spirituality and spiritual practices are also constructed as *organizational wisdom*. Participants talked about the daily tasks at work and the problems that are associated with them. They mentioned feelings of distance and alienation between employees, stress, and the demand to be effective at work. Their responses, we argue, reflect the fundamental difficulties of modern organizations. Spirituality and spiritual practices are perceived and experienced as solutions to these problems—as *organizational wisdom*. Yet, as we demonstrate in the next section, spirituality is not acted on as organizational wisdom.

What Really Happens When Spirituality Enters Profit Organizations?

The accounts of both managers and consultants indicate that despite the general positive evaluation of spiritual ideas and practices as they are carefully brought into the organizational sphere, there are some inherent impediments to an organization's acceptance of spiritual practices. In some cases, consultants' attempts to promote spiritual products are actually rejected. According to our data, some organizations express objections when they are asked to focus on spiritual concepts or on spiritual practices. For example, a coach who negotiated a contract with a well-known American high-tech firm that has several branches in Israel reported that the negotiations went very well until the point at which the senior management found out that the training included meditation. As she put it, "They said that it was too spiritual." Her response in this case was not to try to camouflage her own way but to show persistence and faith in the right "tools" she was offering: "I told them that we would meet again in 5 years." Another consultant reported that offering Zen coaching to a bank was not successful. In this case, the spiritual training was rejected on the grounds that the bank was "too conservative." The organizational representative argued that the process was threatening, saying, "[I]n our organization everyone needs to know his or her place."

What Are the Reasons for Organizational Resistance to Spirituality?

Based on the accounts of consultants and managers, we suggest that the relatively limited growth of spirituality in Israeli profit organizations is at least partially related to the challenges spirituality poses to several basic

assumptions of the dominant paradigm in profit organizations (Schein, 1990). The first assumption is about the concrete goal-oriented nature of the organization. The second is about the organization's need to achieve its goals within a relatively short time. The third is about the nature of the relationships among people in the organization. With regard to the first, a manager of a city department who went through an exceptionally encompassing (and successful) intervention said that initially they thought that the practice "did not suit an urban system with clerks and operation systems." He explained his initial concerns: "We are people of action. We work with budgets, projects, activities." The spiritual project thus began in an atmosphere of suspicion, cynicism, and lack of trust.

Second, participants saw a conflict between an organizational system that prefers short-term intervention and spirituality, which is taken to be a long-term process that needs maintenance. Consultants often struggle with this disparity. Several consultants acknowledged that the interventions that are accepted by the organizations are too short. Other consultants reported that they do not agree to work within too short a time. For example, Nira, a yoga teacher, refuses to deliver single workshops. She believes that "habits are much stronger than us human beings" and that "one needs a real spiritual work which is practiced as a long-term process."

Embedded within consultants' expectations for a long-term process is their expectation that there is a need for maintenance. Ben is a consultant who usually works with salespeople. He argues that the training he offers is not effective if it is not continued. He insists that one needs time to "plant" this approach in daily behavior. Ron, a Buddhism expert who offers spiritual teaching, training, and consulting in cooperation with a psychologist, holds to the same view. He reported a successful case in which he and his collaborator were given the leeway to enter one of the major Israeli health services companies. They were allowed to conduct monthly meetings for a full year. The sessions included talks with the physicians, who had reported feeling burnt out. Ron argued that any intervention process of this kind needs maintenance and that it will hold only as long as the participants "practice." Although some consultants like those mentioned emphasize the importance of a long-term process, others are willing to be involved in short-term processes. For them, any intervention has value since it "plants seeds" that might grow later.

The third area of resistance has to do with the nature of the relationships among the members of the organization. Above, we quoted a bank manager who said "everyone needs to know his or her place in the organization." This statement reflects the importance attributed to social order. It also expresses the perceived threat of spiritual practices to this social order as well as to other

communicative and relational aspects of the organizational life. Unlike "ordinary" consulting, spiritual training may require some kind of physical contact or physical or emotional exposure. This is often considered problematic in the context of work life. Negative responses to such an intervention often demonstrate the clash with basic organizational assumptions.

Iris, the HR manager who participated at a workshop with her colleagues, sheds light on this clash:

> It was very hard. I must admit that for me it was very complicated to be exposed there. Not only because for me as a person it is generally difficult, but even more so because the workplace is where you guard yourself the most, as it affects so many things including your income and your self-image. So, you guard yourself and keep a close watch on the way you may be looked upon in this environment, and you are afraid of being exposed. Moreover, we [female HR managers] are not friends but workplace colleagues, so it is not easy to loosen up. And [during the workshop] we had to dance, say things, or shout. Those kinds of things that in our very normative world are considered as acting like a fool. It makes you feel uncomfortable, especially when you do not know the people well enough, and certainly in the workplace which is a world, which is very formal, very organized, and normative.

In this extremely revealing account, Iris reflects on two interconnected issues. The first is the expectation and need for social order via the maintenance of the boundary between work and nonwork activities. Iris explains that there are certain activities that one should not do with colleagues but rather with friends. Spiritual practices challenge this boundary and thus create unwanted chaos. Second, the account reveals the importance that Iris attributes to holding onto her self-image at work and her rejection of what can be defined as "social nudity." She perceived the practices that required self-exposure as threatening her image, her position at work, and in fact even her job. The literature indeed shows that the individual's desired professional image encompasses personal characteristics such as knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, and values that the individual wishes for others to attribute to him in a given context (Roberts, 2005). Research has shown that projecting images of self is necessary to avoid confusion. Based on these specified images, participants relate to one another and regulate their conduct accordingly (Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Riordan, 1995). Thus, Iris expressed her concern about the proper organizational conduct as well as the practical implications of not maintaining her image at work.

Spiritual consultants or practitioners who work with profit organizations are aware of this resistance. Yael, a yoga teacher, said, "People are skeptical when I suggest Yoga or meditation. They are skeptic about the whole process. They are concerned about how other people would look at them within the organization." Similarly, David, who has been an organizational consultant for more than 20 years, explains about yoga and chi kung:

> Many people are embarrassed to perform these practices. If a manager is perceived as a rational person and he is involved with mysticism or something of that kind, he would hide it or bring it to the organization only as a gimmick.

One organizational consultant argued that although employees may experience spiritual practices as beneficial for themselves, they may be reluctant to be involved with them and especially are not willing to be exposed to other members of the organization, claiming, "they will think that I am out of my mind." Thus, organization members express concern that involvement with spiritual practices would turn them into targets of gossip and would enhance their sense of being outsiders (Michelson, van Iterson, & Waddington, 2010).

Furthermore, many of our interviewees used the Hebrew term *busha* to express their position with regard to practicing spirituality and the way they tended to avoid being associated with spirituality in public, fearing their colleagues' response. In this context, the Hebrew term, which can be translated as a combination of embarrassment, shame, and humiliation, seems to represent the kind of strong social emotion as discussed by Scheff (2000). This emotion of *busha* reflects the individual's awareness of the way people around him or her interpret his or her behavior. The reaction can be felt as a strong negative experience that leads to lowered self-esteem and a potent motivation to hide or escape from any further need to cope with the undesirable characteristic of the self that caused the outcome (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). This reaction is expected to be even stronger if the person believes that others are aware of the deficiency (Smith, Webster, Parrott, & Eyre, 2002; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). This strong emotion is constructed as the result of participants' awareness of the norms and expectations that are part of everyday life in their workplace.

We found, however, that even these powerful emotions did not prevent participants from gaining from a spiritual process. Despite her reservations, Iris, for example, did not fail to mention the benefits she received. She directly discussed the ways in which the workshop led the participants, including her, to attain insights about their profession and how it made them rethink their own potential and approach to building a career.

The consequence of this contradiction between what people experience as beneficial and the "price" that they need to pay when they are associated with the new wisdom in the domain of the organization is manifested in three behavioral responses.

The first response is *blocking*. In those cases, senior managers (often HR people) who were the first to experience some kind of spiritual practices in the organization choose not to promote it further within the organization. Iris is one example. These people often serve as "gate keepers," and their calculation considers the organization's norms and values as well as its power relationships (e.g., what people would think of their choice to include such an intervention).

The second behavioral response occurs when managers acquire spiritual knowledge and practices outside the organization and then use them secretly in the organization. We have heard about senior Israeli managers who travel to India as individuals without their colleagues' knowledge. Other managers use channeling in the process of decision making. However, as we were told, "they [the managers] do it secretly and they pay for it from their own pockets."

The third response sees managers "play" on the boundary between hiding and revealing their choices. Shira, a manager of a team of about 15 people in a high-tech company, disclosed,

> People know that I participated in the workshop and they are satisfied . . . [However] I don't think that my managers would have accepted the workshop. They perceive it as something esoteric and disconnected with the organization activities. They are rational and it is hard for me to know what they would think of it . . . Several team members know that I participated in the workshop but I don't say it openly. Only when someone asks me openly about these workshops I give her or him the information.

Thus, our findings question assertions of the ideal situation in which "spirituality at work" enables individuals to achieve personal fulfillment and spiritual growth as well as feelings of wholeness and connectedness and authentic integration of various parts of their professional and personal lives (Driver, 2005; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2007; Howard, 2002). Our field-based research suggests that individuals did experience a meaningful change. Nevertheless, similar to the data reported elsewhere (Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2002), employees indicated they felt unsafe in expressing spirituality in workplace settings and reported that they needed to calculate their responses within an unwelcoming environment.

Discussion and Conclusions

Our results highlight the need to pay attention to the differences between the individual domain and the organizational domain and between perceptions and actions.

In the individual domain, managers attested that spirituality improved their awareness of people and situations at work, improved communication, and reduced stress. They described spirituality as a positive process that changes the perceptions, emotions, and behavior of the individual. The transformation is thus constructed mainly as *individual wisdom*—integrating affective, cognitive, and reflexive aspects of their personality in response to their work's tasks and problems. However, spirituality and spiritual practices are also constructed as *organizational wisdom*, as a new collective way to behave, and be, at work. Participants talked about the problems of their work, such as feelings of distance and alienation between employees, stress, and the demand to be effective. In fact, participants' perception of spirituality as valuable at both levels, the level of the individual and the level of the organization, reflects the essence of workplace spirituality, that is, workers seeking connectedness in their work community and exploring their inner selves.

Yet there is a tension between the way spirituality is *acted* in the private and public domains. Managers who are involved with spiritual practices in the organization's public domain may suffer negative emotions such as shame and deterioration of their image at work. They may also pursue various forms of resistance, including blocking access to such spirituality. As a result, they might participate in spiritual practices privately while concealing their involvement from colleagues. Thus, at this stage, workplace spirituality as discussed in our study is *perceived* as organizational wisdom by the majority of managers, but *it is not acted* as such. Workplace spirituality is acted on the individual domain, with limited influence on the environment. Both managers and consultants tend to camouflage spirituality (Zaidman et al., 2009), and there is no evidence of collective practices (Kessler, 2006).

We argue that spirituality is not acted as organizational wisdom because of the gap between its core ideas and practices and the existing wisdom. Workplace spirituality suggests an alternative to the central assumptions of the organization and not to its marginal values or norms. More specifically, workplace spirituality suggests alternative ways of thought and behavior with regard to action or doing, time, and relationships. These perceptions are perceived as threatening and are thus rejected or marginalized. The most important clash is related to the assumptions of social order and social relationships. Individuals tend to resist the notion of "removing the masks" and instead recognize the importance of projecting the right image at work. Furthermore, members of

organizations reject the borderless approach of specific practices and express desire for social order.

From the case of spirituality, we learn that when there are significant gaps between a new wisdom and the existing wisdom, it is most likely that the new wisdom will be adopted only by a few and have little impact on the environment.

Future research should explore whether agents of translation indeed identify those areas with significant gaps and invest effort in finding ways to reduce them. Research may also focus on the agents whom the organization should choose to promote or incorporate spirituality. Our findings show that the organization's managers or HR people are often reluctant to promote spiritual ideas in the organization for fear of paying a social price. Thus, better criteria should be developed for choosing the right agents to accomplish the task of incorporating a new wisdom into the organization.

Appendix A

Profile of Managers

Meir	Male	Senior manager	Medium-size engineering company
Iris	Female	HR manager	Large high tech
Shira	Female	Team manager	Medium-size high tech
Manager A	Male	CEO	Medium-size engineering company
Manager B	Male	Owner and manager	Consultant company
Manager C	Male	Research and development manager	Engineering company
Manager D	Male	Department manager	Government

Appendix B

Interviews With Managers

1. How, when, and why did spirituality enter the organization?
2. Who introduced spirituality to your organization? Who objected to the idea or the practice? Who in the organization is exposed to the practice?
3. If there were objections, what were they? What did the supporters say? What were the terminology and the rhetoric of those who objected and of those who supported the practice?

(continued)

Appendix B (continued)

4. In your view, did spirituality become a part of the organization?
5. What is your personal view (thoughts, feelings) of the organization's spirituality?

Interviews With Organizational Consultants

1. What is spirituality? How would you explain or define it?
2. What do you bring to organizations? What are the sources (professional, philosophical, spiritual, etc.) on which you rely?
3. Please describe your work in organizations.
4. What difficulties do you face, if any, when introducing spirituality to organizations? Do organizations' members accept or reject these ideas and practices?

Note

1. In the following discussion, we employ pseudonyms to preserve the anonymity of our participants.

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