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A Researcher in Wonderland:
A spiritual approach from paradigm to practice

Thesis submitted by Ann Michelle Carrington BSW (Hons)

In fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
School of Arts and Social Sciences.

James Cook University, Cairns, Queensland.
October, 2010.
Statement on the Contribution of Others

Research field costs up to $3000 and a HECS Exemption scholarship were provided by James Cook University.

An Australian Post-Graduate Award 2007-2010 provided a stipend.

Denise Carrington – Smith proof read the thesis on a voluntary basis. This is not her field of study and she does not operate a professional editing service.
Declaration on Ethics

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the National Statement on Ethics Conduct in Research Involving Human (1999), the Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice (1997), the James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics, Standard Practices and Guidelines (2001), and the James Cook University Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice (2001). The proposal research methodology received clearance from James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee on the 25th July, 2007, Approval No. H2723.

__________________________    _________________________
Signature                      Date
Acknowledgements

Undertaking a Doctoral degree requires much support and guidance from many beyond those who are recognized as contributors. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and extend my gratitude to those who have so effectively filled these roles.

First and foremost, I would like to extend a special thanks to the three spiritual practitioners who agreed to participate in this research project. Each practitioner gifted me with their time, knowledge and wisdom, not only addressing the research requirements but the requirements of my soul on its unique journey.

To all the staff and faculty in the Social Work and Community Welfare Department at James Cook University, thank you for undertaking your roles with such passion and dedication. Your example is something that has inspired me in my practice, both therapeutic and academic. It was in my years as an undergraduate that I acquired the foundational knowledge of social work to set me in good stead for what I hope will be a lasting and fruitful career.

I extend particular thanks to my principle supervisor, Associate Professor Wendy Earles, who has been on this journey with me from my Honours project. Not only has your support, guidance and encouragement been invaluable but you have served as an incredible role model and mentor professionally and personally. Special thanks to Ms Robyn Lynn as my secondary supervisor, who not only provided insightful and relevant feedback, but who was a great emotional support. Special thanks also to Dr Greta Galloway who was involved in the supervision at the research proposal stage. I feel privileged to have worked with three such gifted and dedicated academics and thank you all for sharing your time, skills and knowledge with me. I have learnt so much.

I would like to thank my mother, Denise Carrington-Smith, for her ongoing support and encouragement throughout my academic career and for her discerning comments, feedback and the editing of this thesis.

I would also like to thank my friends and family, of whom there are too many to mention individually, for their on going support and patience.

Last, but by no means the least, I would like to thank my son, Daniel, for his continued passionate encouragement and support over what has now become many years of study. Over the years, he has not only been supportive but has not complained when I have been there in body, but not in mind. But I am most grateful for the look of pride I see in his eyes which has given me the strength to continue at times when I have felt like walking away.
Abstract

Spirituality is a topic that has gained increased attention in a number of disciplines within the social sciences, including social work. The current discussion and debate of this topic within social work have raised many questions and highlighted gaps at paradigmatic, meaning, construct, theoretical and practical levels. The research engaged in a paradigmatic and theoretical journey which aimed to contribute to theory building through the articulation and authentication of spiritual paradigms and an Integrated Spiritual Practice Framework (ISPF) and application of the ISPF (at the level of ideology, theory and practice and individual). The spiritual paradigms and the ISPF were initially developed in my years as a spiritual practitioner, my undergraduate studies in social work and my Post-Graduate Honours project. This research tackled ontological, epistemological and methodological questions across four suggested spiritual paradigms, those being; spiritual positivism, spiritual constructivism, conscious spiritual and integrated spiritual.

The methods employed were semi-structured in-depth interviews, immersion, and literature survey, guided primarily by the process of meta-triangulation and secondly by the emergent Integrated Spiritual Research Model (ISRM). This process involved immersion within four spiritual ideologies (Sufism, Hinduism, Buddhism and integrated spiritual) to scrutinize and analyze the spiritual paradigms and ISPF from each spiritual ideological perspective which informed the initial understandings and structures, and led to further theory building of both. Immersion within Sufism, Hinduism and Buddhism was achieved in person and included a number of semi-structure interviews with the participating practitioners. Immersion within the integrated spiritual was achieved through literature survey of ten texts. Methods employed to demonstrate the potential application at the level of ideology, theory and practice required the additional collection of data from one text pertaining to ideology and one text pertaining to theory and practice. A self-reflective case study of the research was used in the application to the individual.
This study found that each ideological perspective provided evidence and support for the suggested spiritual paradigms, and authenticated and further build upon the basic structures of the ISPF. This resulted in the discovery of new layers within the initial framework and also discovered various distinct uses. This allowed movement from the single framework of the ISPF to its new forms as the Integrated Spiritual Theoretical Model (ISTM), the Integrated Spiritual Analytical Tool (ISAT), the Integrated Spiritual Approach to Practice (ISAP), the Integrated Spiritual Research Model (ISRM) and the Integrated Spiritual Research Approach to Practice (ISRAP). The research was able to contribute further by demonstrating the potential application of the ISAT, ISAP, ISRM and the ISRM.

There were a number of unexpected findings of which the most significant would be the theory for truth, ways of knowing, spiritual methods and measures and spiritual approaches to research. At the completion of the research process two overarching findings were identified: the importance of the paradigmatic links to practice and the importance of addressing tensions and barriers when attempting to integrate spirituality. This research offers the beginnings of a response to gaps in the integration of spirituality, enabling spiritual knowledge, methods, measures, theories and practices to be accessible to the social sciences and social work, academically and practically.
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