

# What are we really talking about when we say the word 'spirituality'?

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It could be argued that one of the reasons why spirituality is slow to be accepted as an important contributor to leader and employee performance is its current conceptualisation. For example, in using the word spirituality are we talking about what we believe spirituality to be or what we 'do' to be spiritual, or something else entirely? Given this context, it is unsurprising that academic research into the role of spirituality in the workplace often shows mixed results. What is spirituality, then, and what is a useful way of considering its elements? As part of extensive PhD-level research exploring spirituality in contemporary society, the present author proposed, tested empirically and validated a holistic conceptual framework for considering spirituality, consisting of four layers of increasing abstraction, namely: (1) spiritual practices; (2) spiritual presence; (3) spiritual beliefs; and (4) conceptual complexity. The most tangible layer of spirituality is conceptualised as the specific behaviours and practices an individual undertakes to explore spirituality (e.g. attending church, meditation, etc). Conversely, the most abstract layer of spirituality is one's frame of reference (i.e. conceptual complexity), that is, their spiritual 'self-theory'. The applications of this framework to spirituality in leadership are many, including the design and delivery of leader and leadership development programs. In concluding, this paper calls for the acknowledgement by leadership development practitioners of the important role of spirituality in supporting leaders tackle today's increasingly complex world.

**Key words:** Spirituality, identity development, leadership, consciousness development, meaning and purpose

## INTRODUCTION

Otto Sharmar (2009b) argues, 'Leaders in institutions around the world face unprecedented economic, social, ecological, and political challenges' (p. 4) and more expansive ways of considering the current challenges we face as a global society are needed (Hames, 2007; Scharmer, 2009a). But, what does 'more expansive' mean? According to some, it involves an approach to leadership that involves greater levels of collaboration amongst diverse groups with the aim being the harnessing of collective wisdom in the creation of business and social value (Hurley & Brown, 2009). To others, 'more expansive' means leaders (individually and collectively) adopting more evolved and inclusive world-views (Cook-Greuter, 2004). It is the latter perspective as it relates to spirituality and leadership that is the focus of this paper.

The last decade has seen an abundance of academic research undertaken on the construct of

spirituality (Dy-Liacco, Kennedy, Parker & Piedmont, 2005; Moberg, 2002). Research to date has focused on the defining and conceptualising of spirituality (refer to Pargament 1999b for an overview); the measurement of spirituality (Howden, 1993; Levenson, Aldwin & Shiraishi, 2005; Miller, 2004; Piedmont, 1999); measurement issues relating to the operationalisation of spirituality (Moberg, 2002); and spirituality's construct distinctiveness from other related constructs, such as psychological well-being, personality, emotional intelligence, etc (Piedmont, 1999). Further, research into spirituality has explored the function of spirituality within a range of contexts, such as the role of spirituality in facilitating healthy outcomes (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000) and the utility of spirituality in the workplace (Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Given the groundswell of research into spirituality in recent years, it is somewhat surprising that with the quantity of research completed on the construct of spirituality there has, until recently, failed to be a greater acknowledgement of spirituality as an important factor underpinning human functioning (Helminiak, 2008).

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It could be argued that the acceptance of the importance of spirituality within a workplace context is even lower. Indeed, some researchers in the workplace field go one step further and state that the rigour of academic research into workplace spirituality is poor (Milliman et al., 2003). The reasons for this are many. In a recent literature review of research exploring the predictive utility of spirituality in the workplace by the present author (Harmer, 2009), five key reasons for why findings pertaining to spirituality in the workplace are inconsistent were identified. These include:

1. Research considering spirituality in the workplace is concurrently exploring religion in the workplace.
2. Issues pertaining to the conceptualisation of spirituality, that is, a lack of clarity as to whether existing research exploring spirituality in the workplace has conceptualised spirituality as a set of beliefs or attitudes, or behaviours and practices.
3. The employing of potentially confounding constructs to operationalise spirituality, e.g. Milliman et al.'s (2003) conceptualisation of spirituality as (in part) an alignment with an organisation's values.
4. The omission of spirituality as a variable worthy of consideration in most workplace-specific research, which is unfortunate especially considering Csikszentmihalyi (1998) and Seligman's (2002) strong argument that the finding of personal meaning in one's work is crucial to an employee's performance.
5. The cultural and sub-cultural challenges related to the operationalisation of spirituality.

Of the five issues plaguing the efficacy of existing research exploring spirituality in the workplace, the present paper will seek to provide a perspective on the first two.

## ARGUMENT JUSTIFICATION

Sharmer (2009a) calls for a more conscious (i.e. mindful) approach to leadership to illuminate the blind-spots plaguing leaders' current approaches to addressing the whole-system challenges we currently face as a society. In a similar vein, the founder of the Visa Corporation, Dee Hock, calls for *wise leadership* which he describes as a leader's

capacity to think in holistic, subjective, spiritual and creative ways in addressing today's global challenges (Hock, 2005). Given the current juncture in our social evolution and that the ultimate concern of spirituality is to expand one's consciousness (see Wink & Dillon, 2002), the role of spirituality in expanding consciousness and developing wiser leaders appears clear.

However, grounding of the construct of spirituality is required, so that the 'map' for how spirituality evolves consciousness and thus supports 'wiser' approaches to leadership becomes clear. Primarily, the grounding of the construct of spirituality would involve the establishment of a universally accepted definition of spirituality – and if this is not possible, a set of universal guiding principles or indicators of a broader latent spiritual construct must be identified (Helminiak, 2008). Second, this would involve agreement from the research community as to how the construct of spirituality is best conceptualised. Given the inherent challenges of establishing a universally accepted definition of spirituality (Hill & Hood, 1999), the latter approach of establishing a conceptual framework for synergising the various operationalisations of spirituality could be argued to be of greater value.

The present author argues that there are three elements that need to be considered in the conceptualisation of spirituality (and leadership), regardless of context. First, a person's frame of reference (Hy & Loevinger, 1996), that is, his or her level of conceptual complexity, must be taken into account. This is especially important when interpreting a person's 'score' on a measure of spirituality (and leadership). From a research perspective, a failure to do so might result in an individual scoring high on a measure of spirituality and thus being considered highly spiritual, when in fact they may be considering spirituality from a somewhat self-centred or closed-minded perspective. From a leadership development perspective a person's level of conceptual complexity will impact their *capacity* for, amongst other things, systemic thinking (Cook-Greuter, 2004); in other words, an individual's capacity to be a wise leader.

Second, greater clarity is needed in relation to what a person is referring to when they use the word 'spirituality'. Consider for a moment your own use of the word 'spirituality'. Are you referring to spirituality as a belief-structure or a set of behaviours, practices and experiences, or both?

Third, in conceptualising spirituality greater clarity is needed in determining whether a person is consciously (i.e. mindfully) or unconsciously

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undertaking a spiritual path. Miovic (2004) argues that spirituality be considered to be a universal phenomenon. This does not mean, however, that all people consciously choose their current spiritual path, or conversely are present to their spiritual journey. For example, going to church does not necessarily mean the individual has made a conscious and personal choice to follow God. Similarly, undertaking a 'spiritual practice' (e.g. the practice of meditation) does not mean the person is doing so for the purposes of spiritual growth (meditation is often utilised as a way of becoming more relaxed).

Within academic research, it remains unclear as to the erroneous effect a respondent's lack of conscious intent towards spirituality may have on the potential power of the research findings published. Within a leader and leadership development context, presence to one's spirituality allows for 'right mindfulness' at work, that is, the development of a leader's self-awareness, openness to exploring and communicating the wholeness (or 'gestalt') of their work experiences, and the valuing of his or her inter-connectedness with work colleagues (Harmer & Fallon, 2007); put another way, an individual's presence to being a wiser leader. Addressing some of these methodological challenges for spirituality-focused research is likely to alleviate some of the concerns many protagonists have about the field of spirituality-based research in the workplace (Milliman et al., 2003; Tsang & McCullough, 2003).

### A WORKING DEFINITION OF SPIRITUALITY

As already outlined, although there is research into spirituality, the robustness of these research findings could be argued to be questionable. In part, this is due to the lack of a uniform definition of the construct. Any researcher seeking to identify a common and universal definition of spirituality in which to operationalise the construct will likely find this an arduous task fraught with semantic blind-spots, construct confounds, conceptual inadequacies and cross-cultural nuances (Berry, 2005; Thoresen & Harris, 2002). Given this, Berry (2005) recommends researchers provide a definition of spirituality at the commencement of each research manuscript.

Acknowledging the diversity of perspectives pertaining to what spirituality 'is', the present author proposes the following working definition of spirituality. The identified definition of spirituality has been adopted as a result of an extensive literature review of current definitions of

spirituality (see Harmer, 2009). For the purposes of the present paper, spirituality is defined as:

an emergent and continual process of psychological integration towards latter stages of spiritual consciousness. The process is encapsulated by a continual process of integration, fragmentation and re-integration towards an ego-transcended awareness of Self (capital 'S'). The ultimate concern of this process is an awakening towards an awareness of one's boundless connection with all other sentient beings; a return to one's true nature; a commitment to conducting oneself with authenticity; an acknowledgement and acceptance of that which can never be known; and the identification, pursuit and fulfilment of one's unique purpose in life.

The aforementioned definition of spirituality is grounded in identity development, which considers spirituality to be a meaning-making process guiding individuals through ever expanding 'self theories' and consciousness (Puchalski, 2004; Silberman, 2005). Further, the aforementioned definition of spirituality is supported by four themes that could be argued to be central to spirituality, namely:

1. an openness and embracing of the mysteries and unknowns that constitute one's life experiences (Pargament, 1999b; Stifoss-Hanssen, 1999);
2. an exploration and commitment to finding meaning and one's unique purpose for 'existing' (Hill et al., 2000);
3. the embracing of one's interconnectedness with all life and the fostering of connections between all life, that is, a recognition of synchronicity and the development of a commitment to all (Miovic, 2004; Piedmont, 1999); and,
4. the process of self-discovery and the exploration of one's true nature towards an ego-transcended Self (with a capital 'S') (Barnes, 2003; Miovic, 2004).

These four themes, which underpin all spiritual traditions, were identified and validated empirically as part of an extensive research study into spirituality (see Harmer, 2009). It could also be argued that these four themes are key to an individual becoming a wiser leader.

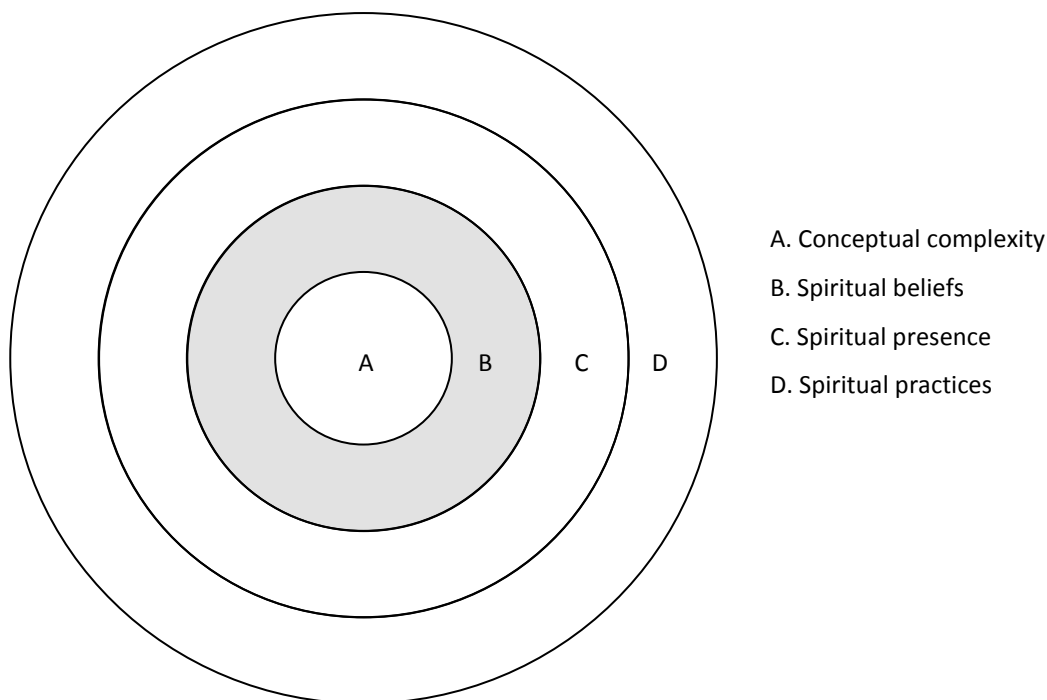
## INTRODUCING A HOLISTIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR CONSIDERING SPIRITUALITY

As outlined, existing research into spirituality fails to make explicit the following as part of the conceptualising the construct of spirituality: (1) a person's spiritual 'frame-of-reference'; (2) what a person is referring to when they use the word 'spirituality'; and (3) if the person is consciously or unconsciously on a spiritual path. This paper argues for the adoption of a holistic conceptual framework for considering spirituality. The proposed holistic conceptual framework consists of four concentric and interdependent circles (Figure 1). The model is

iterative and hierarchical in structure, with the innermost circle having a 'cause-effect' association with each subsequent outer circle.

(Note: The holistic conceptual framework for considering spirituality was tested and validated empirically as part of extensive PhD level research undertaken by the present author. The findings of this PhD study support the validity of the proposed framework proposed in this paper. For additional information on the statistical analyses completed in validating the proposed holistic framework, visit [www.richardharmer.com/phd](http://www.richardharmer.com/phd).)

**Figure 1. A holistic conceptual framework of spirituality**



As presented in Figure 1, the proposed holistic conceptual model of spirituality consists of four concentric and interdependent circles. The innermost circle (designated A) is conceptualised as pertaining to one's level of conceptual complexity, a pseudonym for consciousness that encompasses the range of stage-trait approaches currently utilised in research considering a person's subject-object relations (e.g. ego development, stages of faith, cognitive development, stages of moral development, spiral dynamics, etc). A person's stage of conceptual complexity sets the stage for how he/she forms and maintains spiritual beliefs through which they interpret unique spiritual experiences.

The second-most inner circle (designated B) is conceptualised as representing one's spiritual beliefs towards spirituality. It could be argued that spiritual beliefs are universal principles relevant to all peoples and 'owned' by no one religious or quasi-religious doctrine. As conceptualised by the present author, spiritual beliefs provide commonality for considering all variants of religious and quasi-religious experiences. The third circle (designated C) conceptualises an individual's presence related to the exploration of his/her unique spirituality. It is a person's presence as it relates to spirituality that acts as an interface between believing in spiritual principles and actually undertaking a spiritual path. Finally, the

outermost circle (designated D) is conceptualised as representing the specific activities or practices undertaken by an individual or homogeneous group to explore spirituality.

The conceptualisation of spirituality as consisting of several 'layers' is supported by previous research (Berry, 2005). Berry proposed that the nature of spirituality is a highly abstract phenomenon that needs to be 'represented by behavioural, cognitive, affective and volitional dimensions' (Berry, 2005, p. 625). Tsang and McCullough (2003) also support the conceptualisation of spirituality as hierarchical with an overarching general or dispositional element to spirituality that is likely to be universal to all, coupled with operational or functional sub-domains through which an individual manifests his or her personal spirituality.

## THE HOLISTIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR CONSIDERING SPIRITUALITY IN DETAIL

What follows is a more detailed description of each 'layer' of the present author's proposed and validated holistic conceptual model for considering spirituality.

### The conceptualisation of conceptual complexity

Developmental psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi suggests that life is not simply a cycle, it is an ascending spiral with quantum steps (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). The transcending to latter stages of consciousness allows the individual to concurrently consider different perspectives, and to integrate these differing perspectives and worldviews without judgement or recourse. Therefore, attaining latter stages of consciousness is not just understanding something new, but an entirely different way of knowing (Flier, 1995); it is not what the person thinks, but how they think (Ho & Ho, 2007; Page, 2005). The expansiveness of one's spiritual beliefs and practices, therefore, is limited only by his or her present working knowledge of, and understanding of, spirituality, at their current level of consciousness (Wilbur, 2000). And with many theories of conceptual complexity stating that one's level of development is boundless, an individual's potential for spiritual development is simultaneously limited and unlimited (Hill et al., 2000; Ho & Ho, 2007; Wilbur, 2000).

Using ego development by way of example, one's ego is a 'self-theory' (Loevinger, 1998); it is a personal filter, template or frame of reference for considering the interpersonal world. One's self-

theory commences with a self-centred orientation and evolves towards an ego-transcended worldview of self (Loevinger, 1998). In this way, ego development is related to one's attitudes towards self and others that has the potential to be unencumbered by any one homogeneous group. Finally, ego development is universal, with all peoples, regardless of age, gender, race or cultural-societal context, having to progress through a hierarchical, sequential, invariant, universal and open-ended self-theory towards an 'ever-present Nondual awareness' (Wilbur, 2006, p.74). A more evolved stage of conceptual complexity allows a leader to include more perspectives (and more diverse perspectives) in navigating society's unprecedented challenges, which could be argued to be a critical aspect of being a wiser leader.

### The conceptualisation of spiritual beliefs

Spirituality has been operationalised quantitatively in various ways, including via specific measures of beliefs and attitudes towards self and transcendence as well as measures of spiritual practices, behaviours and activities (Sawatzky, Ratner & Chui, 2005). Indeed, some researchers state that it is important for a measure of spirituality to encompass both aspects (Hill & Pargament, 2003). However, it could be argued to result in a methodological confound, particularly in relation to an examination of spirituality's predictive validity. Using just one example from recent research examining spirituality within a health-related context to illustrate this potential confound, is surviving cancer related to:

- a) a person's beliefs about their spirituality (e.g. an openness to that which cannot be explained through rational science, etc);
- b) the undertaking of specific spiritual practices (e.g. meditation, prayer, etc); or
- c) a combination of both (a) and (b)? (Edmondson, Park, Blank, Fenster, & Mills, 2008)

Although an individual has a general belief system that is coloured by former experiences, the present paper is interested specifically in a person's *spiritual* beliefs; the 'filters' through which spiritual experiences (arising from one's spiritual practice) are screened, interpreted, understood and integrated as aspects of one's broader identity. A 'belief' has been defined in literature as psychologically held understandings or propositions considered to be true (Hermans, van Braak, & Van Keer, 2008). Conversely, practices can be considered to be outwardly manifested activities (or an experience that occurs as a direct result of

the undertaking of an activity). Beliefs are broad concepts that have relevance for a diverse group of people (Fraser, 2004). Practices however, are activities typically undertaken by a specific, homogeneous group (Berry, 2005). However, unlike conceptual complexity (which is considered to be relatively stable across time and context), spiritual beliefs can be considered to be less stable and more permeable. Argued by the present author as having the potential to be universal, spiritual beliefs are dynamic structures that act as filters through which new experiences are screened and interpreted for meaning (Smith & Croom, 2000). Spiritual beliefs act as a personal guide for helping individuals and groups understand the world and themselves. One's daily activities (including spiritual practices) are influenced in part by his or her beliefs. Rosado (2000) states that launching out on a spiritual journey without a map (i.e. a set of spiritual beliefs) with which to chart and interpret the journey will result in the risk of getting lost.

It is unrealistic to assume that all universal spiritual beliefs will ever be identified; however, reductionism is inescapable in all research on spirituality (Moberg, 2002). In an extensive research study conducted by the present author that focused on identifying the universal spiritual beliefs common to all spiritual and religious traditions, four spiritual beliefs were identified, namely: (1) openness to mystery; (2) search for meaning; (3) the exploration of one's interconnectedness; and (4) self-discovery and ego-transcendence (Harmer, 2009). These four indicators of spirituality are considered to be present to some degree for all people. They are guiding life principles for all sentient beings (Harmer, 2009). It could be argued that these four spiritual beliefs provide a set of universal filters through which all individuals can undertake a personal spiritual journey and interpret their unique spiritual experiences. It could also be argued that a wiser leader is also more likely to be more open to mystery, uncertainty and ambiguity; hold a stronger sense of their unique purpose in life; proactively foster interconnectedness in the pursuit of wholeness; and undertake deep self-exploration towards a more expanded sense of self.

### **The conceptualisation of spiritual presence**

In explaining his definition of spirituality, Pargament (1999a) stated that it is critical that spirituality be considered in relation to a search that transcends the self. Pargament went on to argue that a failure to consider spirituality in this light may result in the undertaking of intermediary pursuits being considered spiritual. Both Mahoney

and Pargament (2004) and Hamel and her colleagues (2003) responded to Pargament's earlier comments suggesting that spirituality was a life-choice that an individual adopts on a moment-by-moment basis for his or her entire life. However, is a belief in spirituality enough or do one's spiritual beliefs – a way of being and interpreting one's life – need to be supplemented by a structured spiritual practice so as to truly be spiritual? Moberg (2002) made explicit this conundrum when he stated, 'Just as feeling well physically can be an illusion, so can feeling well spiritually. People may be deceived into thinking or feeling that they are spiritually healthy when they in fact are rotten to the core ... [people] can be deceptive because *feeling well* is not *being well*' (pp. 54-55). In a longitudinal study published by Wink and Dillon (2002), the findings suggest that what was critical to the depth of cognitive development (i.e. conceptual complexity) attained in late adulthood was a commitment to intentionally incorporating a spiritual practice into one's everyday life.

Although numerous researchers state that spirituality is a life path, research is yet to describe in detail the guiding principles of that path. The present author proposes that the spiritual belief-practice interface is based upon the premise of *spiritual presence*. The present author argues that this spiritual beliefs-practices interface is grounded via three primary tenets, namely:

1. *intentionality*, one's spiritual journey must be commenced and undertaken with intent and a conscious focus with an inherent knowledge of 'why' spirituality is important to the individual;
2. *commitment*, one's spiritual journey must be proactively integrated into all domains and roles of one's life (e.g. family, work, friends, etc), that is, spirituality is not considered 'taboo', unrelated or inappropriate in any one aspect of one's life; and
3. *timelessness*, an acknowledgement that one's spiritual journey will take a lifetime (or lifetimes).

With respect to the third tenet, the present article emphasises that intentionality and commitment is not enough. It is an understanding that the undertaking of one's spiritual practice is a never-ending exploration that sets it apart from nearly all other intermediary pursuits. Within the context of the present paper's focus on spirituality and leadership, the author argues that remaining

'present' to one's leadership is a key component for becoming a wider leader.

### **The conceptualisation of spiritual practice**

It is the position of the present author and many others that latter stages of consciousness are more readily available as a result of intentional spiritual practice (for example Page, 2005; Rosado, 2000; Wilbur, 2006; Wink & Dillon, 2002). A *spiritual practice* can be defined as: 'the conscious and intentional commitment to the undertaking of acts (i.e. behaviour-based activities) or a series of acts over time for the purpose of improving one's functioning in domains beyond the practice field itself'. One's spiritual practice provides the webbing that unifies the beliefs and teachings of spirituality into everyday life (Luskin, 2004). For example, mindfulness-based meditation is the practice of manifesting heightened awareness of oneself, within a somewhat contrived situation (e.g. sitting on one's meditation cushion), so as to manifest heightened awareness in one's 'every-day' activities (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). A formal practice is an important aspect of one's spirituality. It is only through sustained practice – often with the guidance of a spiritual teacher – that one has the opportunity to delve deeper into and remain more present with increasingly expansive levels of consciousness (Wilbur, 2006).

A spiritual practice, according to King and Nicol (1999), serves the function of exploring the elements of one's unique spiritual 'journey'. King and Nicol (1999) defined a spiritual journey as 'a process of focusing within, in order to gain an awareness of Self. Only through this awareness of Self can individuals become truly actualised and find meaning and purpose in their work and in their lives. This is the individuation process which produces both an interconnection with Self and a connection with others, fostering a sense of order and balance in an otherwise chaotic life' (p. 234). The undertaking of a spiritual practice, therefore, provides the mechanism for aligning one's inner and outer worlds.

There are countless spiritual practices available and undertaken within particular religious, quasi-religious or non-religious doctrines (Moberg, 2004). Given the potentiality of such a diverse range of practices, it could be argued that an examination of the utility of the construct of spirituality via an exploration of specific behaviours and activities (or an experience that occurs as a direct result of undertaking such activities) is incomprehensible. This is a view that is challenged by Kohls, Walach and Wirtz (2009) who state that it is possible that the exploration of spiritual practices rather than

spiritual beliefs will yield more meaningful results, especially in the field of spirituality and health. The attempt to discover the dimensions, correlates and sources of association pertaining to the infinite number of spiritual practices is underway and poses an elusive and rich challenge to future research (Moberg, 2002).

As a bookend to the conceptualisation of spiritual beliefs, spiritual practices provide a contextual framework (e.g. the values and doctrines of a specific religion or quasi-religion) for exploring and interpreting one's unique spiritual experiences, and to integrate those unique and personal experiences towards a deepening of one's consciousness (Rosado, 2000; Wilbur, 2001). The same could be argued for considering leadership as a practice whereby a leader consciously and intentionally commits to the undertaking of behaviour-based activities over time for the purpose of improving their leadership functioning beyond the practice field itself; that is, the practice of leadership in becoming a wiser leader.

### **APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK TO LEADERSHIP**

Consider for a moment the complex, dynamic and non-linear world that faces today's leaders. In researching the leadership praxis needed for today's complex world, leadership and management researcher and futurist, Richard Hames, suggests leaders (regardless of context) are increasingly being asked to deal with more emergent, ambiguous and uncertain organisational system dynamics (Hames, 2007). Further, they are being asked to connect and network more broadly, even globally, in order to gather the required information and perspectives to perform their role effectively. Finally, they are required to undertake continuous personal and professional development in order to remain abreast of ever-changing organisational dynamics, and to maintain their leadership 'brand resonance' (Hames, 2007). Kevin Cashman echoes these observations in his book, *Leadership from the inside out*. Cashman (2008) also highlights the importance of a leader attaining purpose mastery by proposing that a leader's purpose is present in how he/she shows up in whatever activity they are engaged in. A leader's purpose mastery is supported by their spiritual presence, or 'right mindfulness'. (Harmer & Fallon, 2007).

Cashman goes on to state that if a leader ignores their calling, 'no amount of external success can make [them] feel complete' (p. 69). It could be

argued that leaders of today need to adopt a 'way of being' as a leader that incorporates the four spiritual beliefs identified by the present author (Harmer, 2009). However, if leaders are going to navigate complex, dynamic and non-linear organisational systems effectively, this is not enough. Today's leaders must also maintain moment-by-moment presence (i.e. spiritual presence) in how they take up their role in leading self and others. Further, they must have an established personal leader and leadership development 'regime' (i.e. a spiritual practice). As argued in this paper, doing so is likely to support the expanding of a leader's consciousness towards a more systemic, participatory and integrated approach to leading self, others and their organisation.

## CONCLUSION

The present paper promotes a holistic conceptual framework for considering spirituality and argues that the framework provides the scaffolding

essential for a robust exploration of spirituality in a range of domains, including leader and leadership development. Further, the proposed holistic conceptual framework provides an approach for considering the aspects of one's spiritual development and also provides insight into the aspects of one's spiritual development where he/she may lack rigour. This is particularly relevant to leader and leadership development in organisations. As argued, there is a greater need than ever before for today's organisational leaders to possess systemic thinking capacity (i.e. a post-conventional level of consciousness). This is a way of thinking available to less than 20% of the world population (Cook-Greuter, 2004). Therefore tomorrow's (and today's!) leader and leadership development programs need to proactively develop leaders' systemic capacities. The proposed holistic conceptual framework provides a structured approach – grounded in spirituality – for developing a leader's systemic thinking capacity (i.e. their level of consciousness), as well as a framework for plotting of one's spiritual growth trajectory within the context of leader and leadership development.



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