

## Spirituality in the mindsets of organisational members

Ekaterina Zhuravleva and Elizabeth E. More  
Macquarie Graduate School of Management, Sydney

While the construct of spirituality is gaining more attention in organisation and management discourse, it is still problematic to capture empirically what kind of employee behaviours can be regarded as spiritual. This paper presents partial findings of a larger study investigating how individuals with different mindsets manifest and achieve spirituality and, consequently, understand their organisations. Firstly, the conceptual framework of 'Four Worlds' is introduced. Individuals' mindsets are juxtaposed along the dimensions of the duality of thinking and metaphysics of interactions. The literature demonstrates that individuals from these 'Four Worlds' see and understand the organisation quite differently. The operational definition of spirituality is followed by the description of and rationale for the research methods. While qualitative content analysis assigns research participants into four of the outlined worlds, hermeneutic methodology captures the gestalt of developed themes in the model of spiritual presence. In particular, the model demonstrates that spirituality is manifested through maturity, an emergent category formed by four 'gestalts' – mind and heart openness, reflexivity, responsibility, and ultimate concerns. In answering how spirituality is achieved, the category of internalisation of spirituality emerged, in turn formed by three 'gestalts' of the nature of spiritual commitment, the internalisation of spirituality through social choices and the content of faith. The paper ends with a number of conclusions and recommendations for future research.

**Key words:** organisation, mindset, spirituality

### INTRODUCTION

This paper is a part of a larger study, in which a framework of four different spiritual worldviews of organisational members is tested to find differences in their understanding of their organisations.

The context of the study is outlined and the conceptual framework is discussed, followed by justification of the research methodology. In the findings, the emergent model of spiritual presence is discussed, and the paper concludes with arguments on significance plus theoretical and practical implications.

The research question developed through a number of stages. It was initiated by the first author's personal work experience in integrating spirituality in organisations, and witnessing different employees' perceptions of their organisation as their spiritual worlds were revealed through organisational interactions.

The literature review confirmed a strong

connection between a perception of the organisation and one's worldview and personality (Gustavsson & Harung, 1994). Pursuing the connection between what individuals are and their view of the organisation, introduced the authors to the employee-organisation relationship (EOR) literature. This looked at both personal and organisational aspects of the relationship, as well as the dynamics of exchange and fit between them, such as the employee-organisation fit theory (Ambrose, Arnaud, & Schminke, 2008), psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995; 2001), organisational commitment (Madsen, Miller, & John, 2005), and social exchange as inducements-contribution theory (Wang, Tsui, Zhang, & Ma, 2003).

While the exchange dynamics of the employee-organisation relationship are central to EOR research, two fundamental assumptions drive it: the implicit acknowledgement of an employee's World and their subsequent understanding of the organisation for which they work from within this World. The limitations of EOR discourse in this regard (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007), revealed the problem of building discourses on the implicit assumptions of certain worldviews/mindsets. This inconsistency prompted the search for the correlation between an employee's World and

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ekaterina Zhuravleva, Macquarie University, North Ryde NSW 2109, Australia. Email: [ekaterina.zhuravleva@mq.edu.au](mailto:ekaterina.zhuravleva@mq.edu.au)

his/her understanding of organisation in other organisation discourses, such as systems theory (Senge, 1990; 2001), symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934; Stacey, 2003) and complexity theories (Lissack & Letiche, 2002), plus theories of collective consciousness (Heaton, Schmidt-Wilk, & Travis, 2004; Schmidt-Wilk, Alexander, & Swanson, 1996).

With the initial interest in spirituality and investigation of the dynamically growing discourse of management, spirituality and religion (MSR), it became obvious that seeing an individual as ego-driven and only-money oriented doesn't encompass research on an individual's spiritual nature, such as employees' altruistic acts at work and commitment and service to others (Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf, & Saunders, 1988), compassion (de Souza, 2006; Driscoll & McKee, 2007; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008) and search for meaning at work (Driver, 2007; Tisdell, 2002).

In defining spirituality as an inherent condition of all human beings to unravel divine potential through dimensions of transcendence, interconnectedness and the search for meaning, the authors modified the notion of the 'World' into a 'Spiritual World'. Whilst the artificial and elitist division between spiritual and non-spiritual is avoided, manifestation and achievement of spirituality plays an important role in individuals' understanding of their organisations.

Therefore, the central research question of the study is: How does manifestation and achievement of spirituality by organisational members influence understanding of their organisations?

There are four sub-questions:

- What spiritual worlds are there?
- How is spirituality manifested in the spiritual worlds of organisational members?
- How is spirituality achieved in the spiritual worlds of organisational members?
- How do the spiritual worlds of organisational members compare in understanding of the organisation?

While answering sub-questions 2-4 from data analysis, the answer to sub-question 1 is provided by a novel Four Worlds' conceptual framework, arising from the literature review.

Within the scope of this paper, sub-questions 1 – 3 are answered, while sub-question 4 remains for the future.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section unravels the existence of different mindsets within organisation discourse and outlines understanding of individuals' spiritual nature within each world. The theoretical framework originates from two core (for this study) works – Stacey (2003, 2007) and Gustavsson (1995, 2001, 2005). Stacey (2003; 2007) emphasises organisational understanding from different perspectives. He criticises research involving mechanistic portrayal of an individual and unanswered questions about the nature of the organisation which is viewed as 'one and many' – separated parts, where individuals are faced with a dilemma of 'either ... or', either organisation or me (Levinson, 1965). He also faults the systems' theory approach to organisations (Senge, 1990), where the individual is also seen as separated from the organisation by time and space, juggling with the dilemma of 'both ... and' in understanding oneself and organisation. As an alternative, Stacey offers the symbolic perspective, which places an individual as a co-creator of the organisation in the dichotomy of 'and... and', following Mead's (1934) notion that gesture and response arise simultaneously and create a cultural context.

Closer investigation of Stacey's three worlds led the authors into extrapolating the driving characteristics (dimensions) of these worlds. The first world clearly represented dual thinking (duality of understanding reality) rooted in materialistic interactions (metaphysics of interactions). Systems theory thinking was dualistic as inward-outward separation of individual and collective, but more transcendental in the way individuals interacted, in seeking networking and deeper relationships. Stacey's world represented non-dualistic thinking, with individual and organisation seen as simultaneously unfolding, while limiting interactions to the symbolic (materialistic) level.

With the framework unfolding, the obvious gap was in the absence of the world of non-dual thinking and transcendent interactions. The literature on workplace spirituality and, specifically, the Maharishi organisational stream of collective consciousness, provided the missing link. Here, an individual is viewed as realising his/her spiritual potential and perceiving reality in a non-dualistic manner, alongside the transcendent nature of interactions, as individuals connect not only at the material level, or the level of symbols, but also at the level of energy, or consciousness (Gustavsson, 2001).

Juxtaposing four different perspectives and inductively extrapolating the dimensions against

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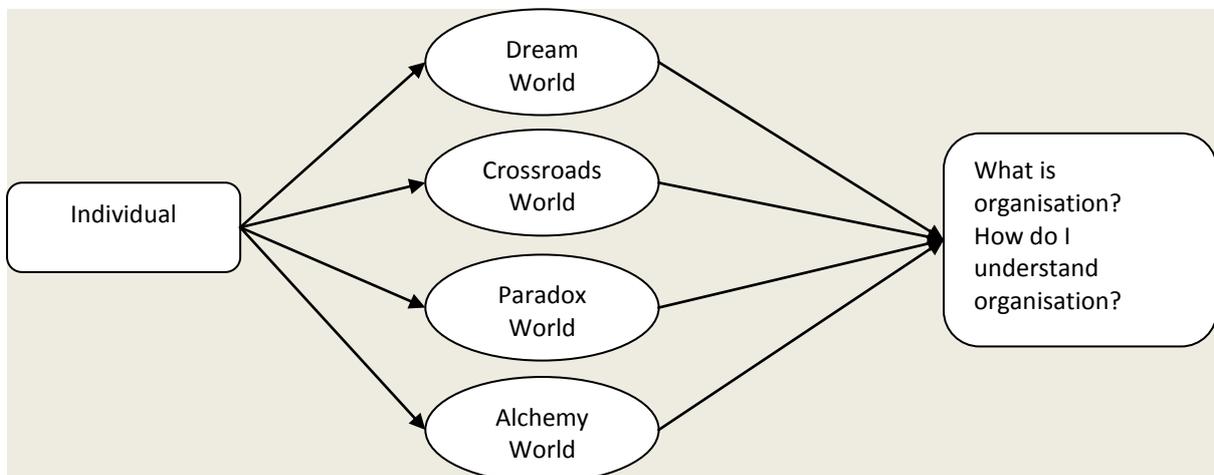
which they can be compared created the Four Worlds' framework.

**Table 1. Four Worlds framework based on dimensions of ontology and interactions**

<b>Metaphysics of interactions</b>	<b>Materialistic</b> (physical & symbolic)	<b>Transcendent</b> (meta-physical)
<b>Duality of understanding reality</b>		
<b>Dualistic</b> <i>(as separating self from its environment)</i>	Dualistic –Materialistic (Dream World) (post)-bureaucracy OB theories (Levinson, 1965; Rousseau, 1995) Organisation and individual as one and many  Either... or...	Dualistic – Transcendent (Crossroads World) system's thinking System's theory (Senge, 1990)  Organisation and individual as a separate part and a separate whole  Both... and
<b>Non-dualistic</b> <i>(as applying the principle of oneness of consciousness in self and others)</i>	Non-dualistic – Materialistic (Paradox World) symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) & complexity theories (Letiche & Hatten, 2000)  Organisation and individual emerge simultaneously in everyday interactions (consciousness), or as one and the same  And... and	Non-dualistic – Transcendent (Alchemy World) collective consciousness (Gustavsson, 2001; Strohl, 1998)  Organisation and individual are expressions of one source of consciousness. They exist as one and are non-interactive  One...

With the conceptual structure of the study in place, each World can be investigated. This process of 'changing the hats', similar to Bolman and Deal's (2003; 2008) reframing technique, helps reveal the driving assumptions and main organising principles of each World. Applied to individuals, it creates a 'multiple mindsets' tool for comparing the understanding of organisations from four different perspectives, bearing in mind the presence of spirituality in each of the Worlds which played an important role in naming each of the Worlds .

**Figure 1. Changing the hats outlook**



To answer the first research sub-question completely, an understanding of the term 'spirituality' is needed. The Paradox and the Alchemy Worlds demonstrate that when ontology reflects perspectives closer to non-dualism, when an individual perceives himself/herself as more interconnected with the world and deeply connected with the divine, and when the interactions are based on the transcendental values of love and compassion, plus skills of awareness and detachment, the term 'spirituality' begins to appear more and more in the vocabulary of individuals. In the Dream and Crossroads Worlds, in spite of the prevailing feeling of being separate from others, (although striving for connectedness and often being able to understand its existence intellectually) the insatiable search for meaning to escape the 'suffering', the separateness, and alienation, is visibly present as well. In each of the Worlds, therefore, spirituality is present through some or all of its dimensions.

Initial justification for the spiritual perspective was two-fold. First, research on spirituality is at the forefront of legitimising subjective experiences (Wilber, 1995, 1998; 2006) in science. Secondly, spirituality is proving to be the ultimate 'remedy' to save our planet, to make the actions of corporate leaders more responsible, and the lives of employees and members of organisations more harmonious (Emerson & McKinney, 2009; Marques, 2009).

The Four Worlds framework proved to capture where spirituality can be 'found' (or, through what is manifested and achieved) – in the depth of our ontology and our interactions.

Introducing the spiritual perspective of the study, presents conceptual challenges. The first is about capturing the concept of spirituality, as spirituality is 'both highly individual and intensely personal, as well as inclusive and universal' (Howard, 2002:231). Also, engaging in the process of defining poses challenges of arriving at definitions which leave behind the concepts important to others or which highlight the narrow aspect of spirituality and

religion (Hill et al., 2000). As Gull and Doh (2004) argue, by defining we delimit forming boundaries around the concept with the aim of differentiating it from other concepts, necessary to create the common language between writer and reader and the study's conceptual foundation.

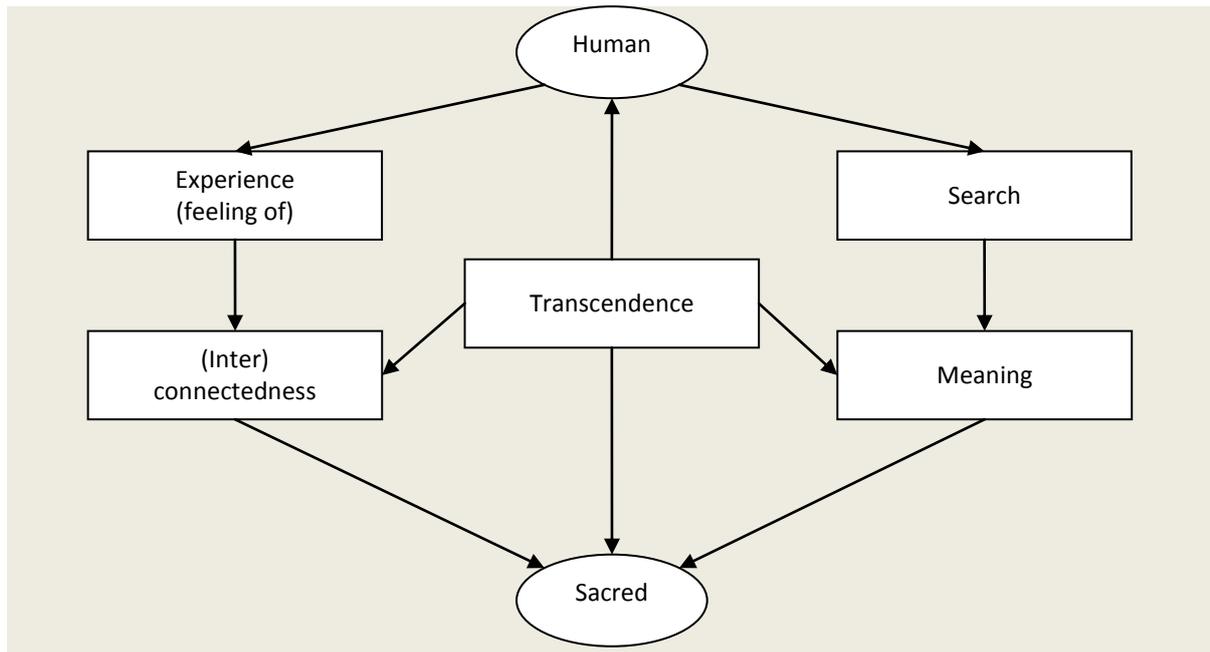
The second challenge in working with the construct of spirituality is differentiating between spirituality and religion. Hill et al. (2000) warned against antagonising the constructs of religion and spirituality which would lead researchers to ignore rich and dynamic interactions. Yet, such antagonism remains in the spirituality and religion literature.

Acknowledging the overarching trend of an ascending construct of spirituality (Gibbons, 2000) and the descending construct of religion, places the discussion of difference/similarity between spirituality and religion into the sociological context of the evolution of society (Zhuravleva Todarello & More, 2009). As the premise of the theory of spiral dynamics goes (Beck & Cowan, 1996:17), 'different times produce different minds'.

Three distinctive trends reflect this overarching trend: equating spirituality to religion (Allport & Ross, 1967; James, 1902/1997; Quatro, 2004); opposing spirituality and religion (Jung, 1932; Maslow, 1970; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Tisdell, 2002); and the perspective accepted by the authors, (Edwards, 2003; Sinnott, 2002) reconciling the two.

In this study religion is defined as the external expression of spirituality, often revealed as a legitimating approach focusing on normative beliefs and rituals (Hill, Pargament et al., 2000:69). Spirituality, on the other hand, is operationalised as the inherent human condition to connect with the divine within and beyond, and is identified through its key dimensions. These include the human-centred search for meaning' beliefs in and experiences of (inter)connectedness' and the core and sacred principle of transcendence, inherent in any shift/transformation (including psychological growth in human beings) (see Figure 2 for the original model of spiritual dimensions).

Figure 2. The model of spirituality construct



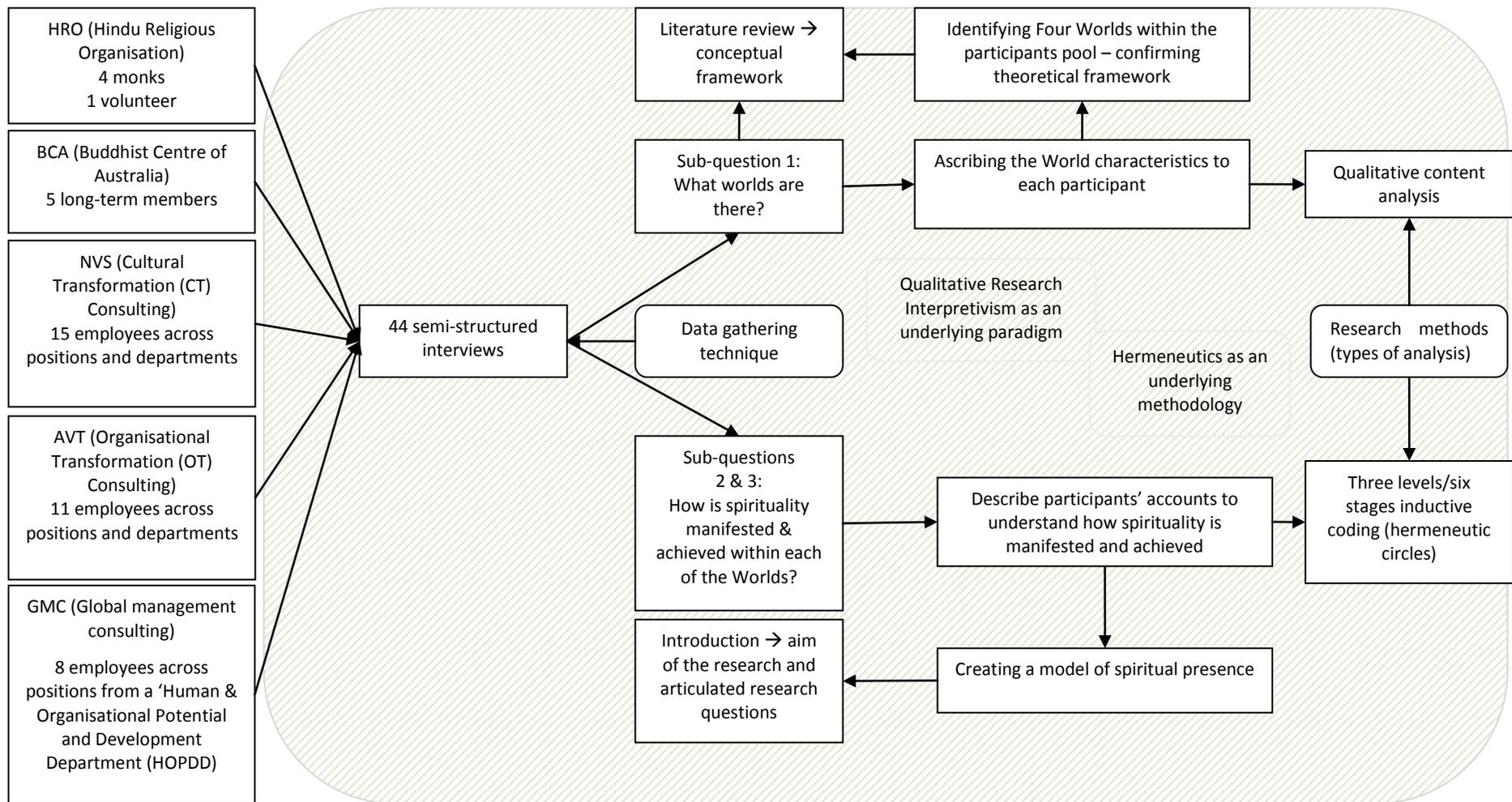
#### DATA COLLECTION AND METHODS

The spirituality-based approach to ‘multiple mindsets’ understanding of the organisation requires a suitable methodology that eschews the quantitative research approach (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004) and provides a deeper insight into the minds and hearts of individuals with the appropriate tools to interpret them. The spiritual underpinning of the present study is coherent with the hermeneutic methodology because the latter best serves the task of understanding a text through reproduction

and re-experiencing of the author’s creative processes (Schleiermacher, 1985).

The research design, from data collection to final interpretation of the results, follows this approach. As Figure 3 summarises, during the process of data collection, 44 individuals from five organisations were interviewed , across two spiritual centres and three management consulting companies . The data gathering technique of semi-structured interviews (30 minutes to two hours) fits the underlying paradigm of interpretivism (Gephart, 1999).

Figure 3. The research design



Qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004), also consistent with the interpretivist paradigm (Gephart, 2004), is used at the first stage of analysis to ascribe the theoretically derived characteristics of each of the Worlds to the

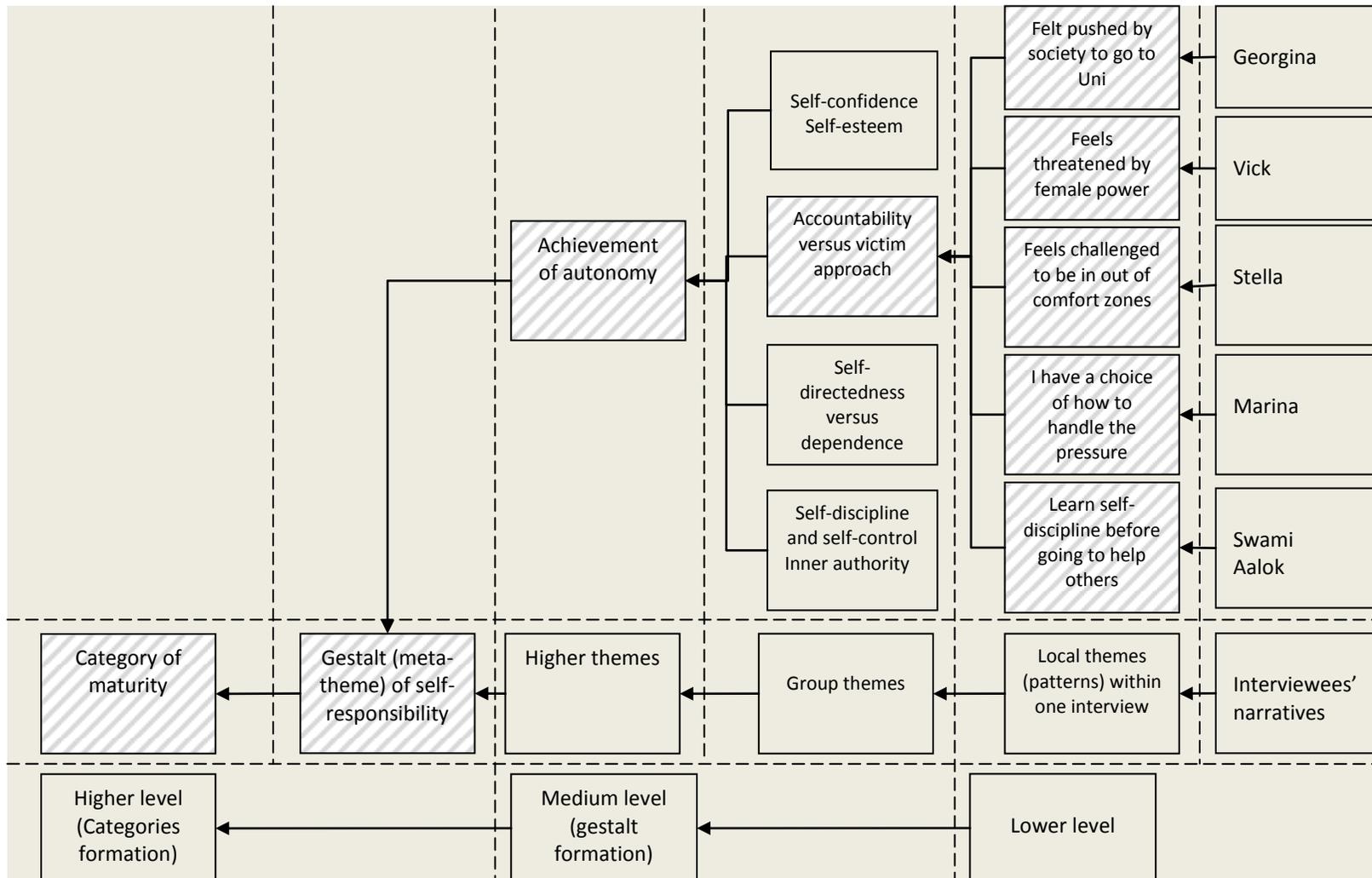
participants. The results of this classification are presented below in the Findings section.

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At the second stage of data analysis, inductive coding of hermeneutic text interpretation is applied, following Prasad's (2002) view of the hermeneutic method transcending the logical and analytical process, becoming 'intuitive and

divinatory' (Palmer, 1969:87). To describe participants' accounts and capture their ways of manifesting and achieving spirituality, the analysis type of inductive coding is used (Figure 3). Figure 4 provides a selective example of this process.

**Figure 4. Selective example of the inductive coding process**



Specifically, it captures creation of only one out of two categories and one out of seven meta-themes (gestalts) used to create them. At the lower level of analysis, the local themes within interviews are formed. They further form group themes and subsequent higher themes (medium level), which completes the process of meta-themes creation (higher level). In this inductive process, every higher order abstract theme is a gestalt-like result of a hermeneutic circle, when the meaning of the whole is constructed through the interplay and emergence of its parts. In this way the part is understood in terms of the whole and the whole in terms of the part. It didn't mean that one part caused another but, rather, that they were related to each other and to the whole 'gestalt' (Phillips, 1996). In this specific example, the category of maturity was formed by one of the two meta-themes (gestalts) – 'self-responsibility', which, in turn, was formed by the 'achievement of autonomy' which emerged from the gestalt of four group themes, one of which, 'accountability versus victim approach', was formed by a number of local themes found in the participants' narratives.

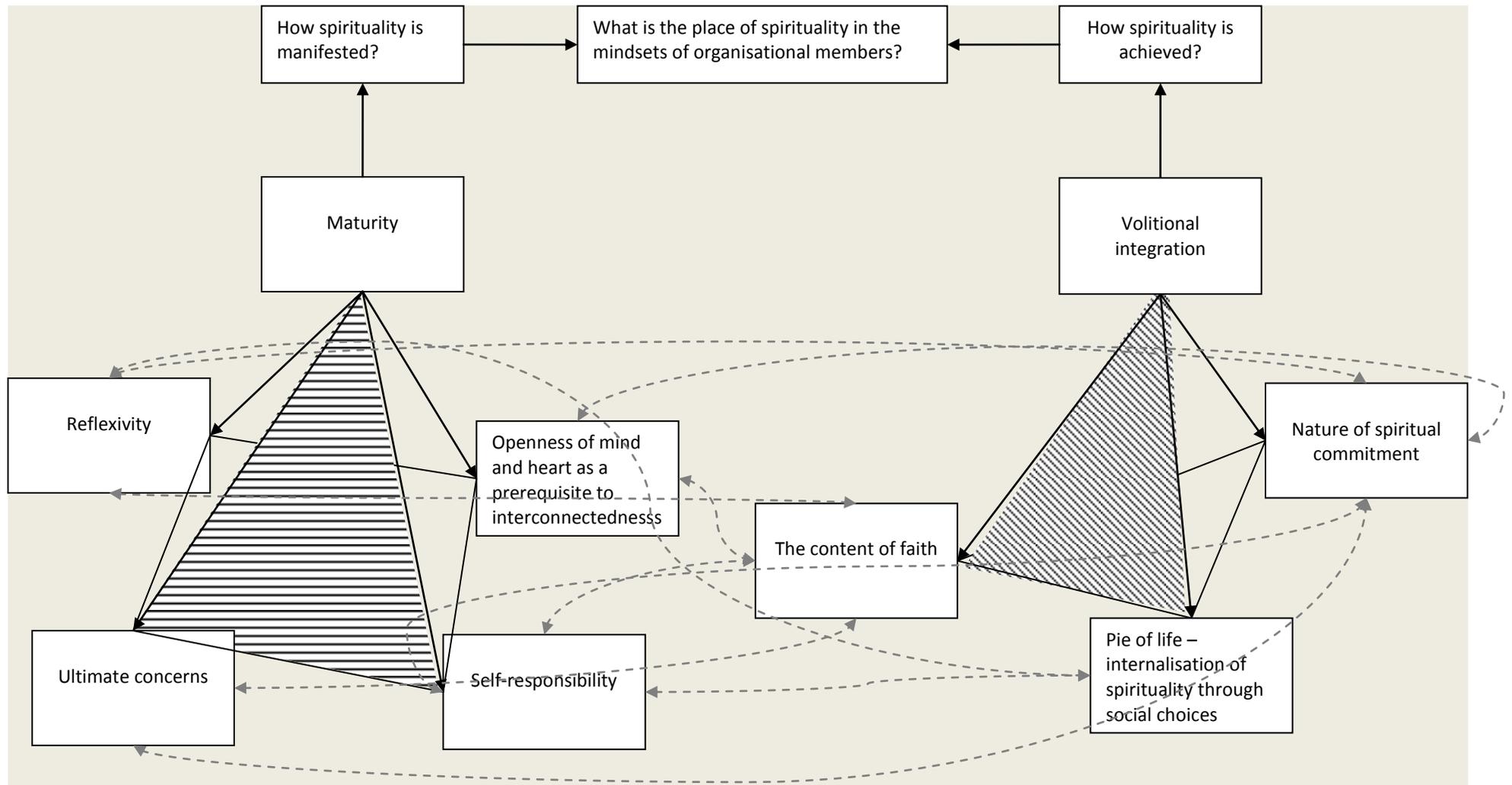
## FINDINGS

During the first stage of data analysis, content analysis was undertaken to ascribe the theoretically derived Worlds' characteristics to organisational members. As a result, the presence of four different mindsets (Worlds) of individuals was confirmed. Specifically, ten participants from three organisations (AVT, NVS, GMC) were identified as having a Dream World mindset; fourteen participants from four organisations (HRO, AVT, NVS and GMC) were identified as having a Crossroads World mindset; eleven individuals from three organisations (AVT, NVS, GMC) demonstrated a Paradox World mindset; and, finally, nine individuals from two organisations (HRO, BCA) displayed an Alchemy World mindset.

As a result of the second stage of data analysis (inductive coding), the emergent model of spiritual presence provides answers to the research questions of how spirituality is manifested and achieved.

Figure 5 provides an overview of the model of spiritual presence.

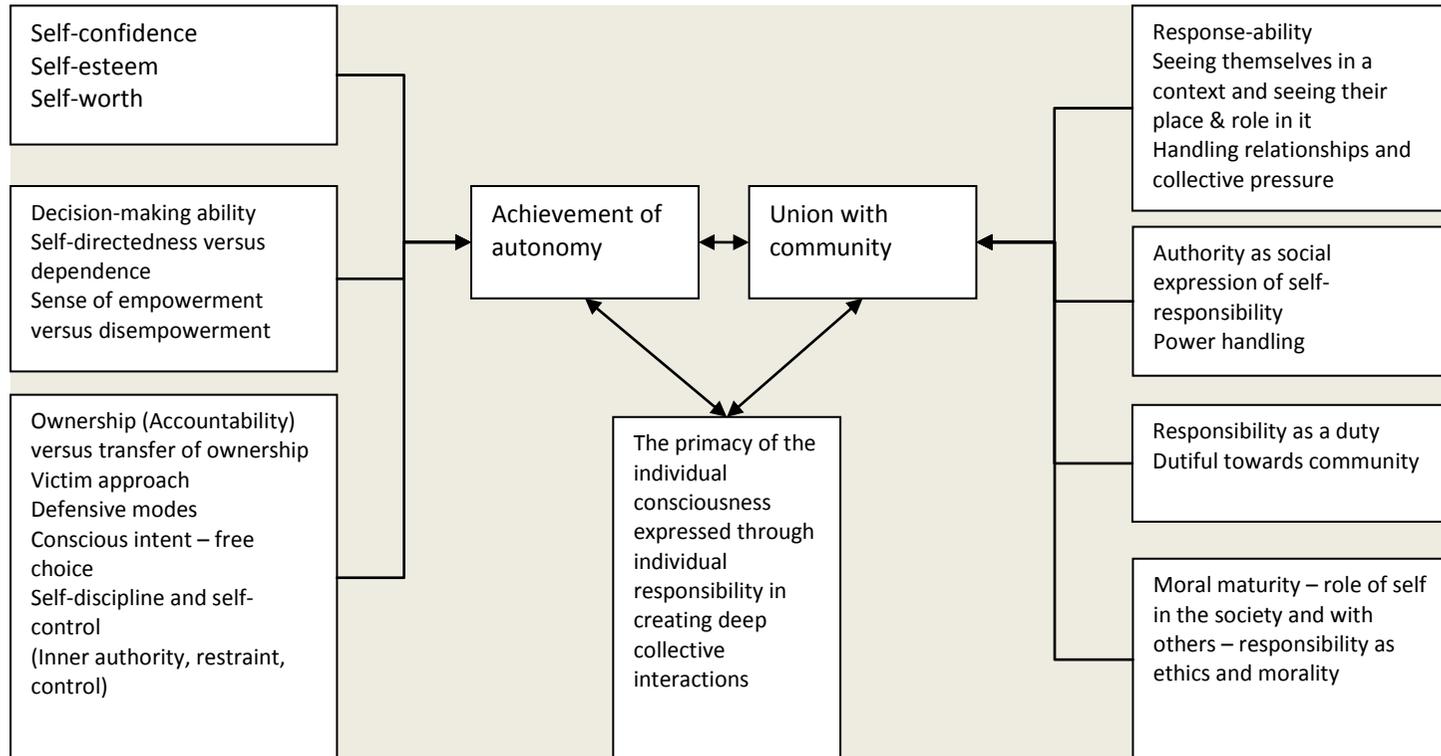
Figure 5. Higher level of analysis: Model of spiritual presence



This model argues that one can recognise spirituality in individuals through signs of their maturity. Specifically, openness of mind and heart, reflexivity, life purpose (ultimate concerns) and self-responsibility display spiritual presence in organisational members. The data process allows one to draw from the depth of

data as each of the maturity aspects is a gestalt product of a hermeneutic circle. So, for instance, in describing someone's maturity, one can look at the achievement of autonomy and expression of union with community as aspects of self-responsibility (See Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Gestalt of self-responsibility**



The reason why manifestation of maturity is a sign of spirituality in individuals is presented in the Conclusions section. Spirituality is manifested in this aspect of individual behaviour through autonomic foundation. According to the gestalt, self-responsible individuals display high self-worth, well-developed self-directedness, and strong decision-making ability, inner authority and a sense of accountability, having transcended victim-based and defensive reactions. Excelling in autonomic freedom is supplemented by the developed sense of union with the community, when individuals see themselves in the context of the collective and understand their role in it as a moral duty to be of service. They also handle power with awareness, grace and compassion.

Similarly, one can recognise mature individuals through their displays of reflexivity; for instance, the way they handle heated discussions and deal with negative emotions, whether they recognise their limitations, work on them, while fundamentally accepting who they are. Spirituality is delivered through the mature aspect of open mind and heart, as organisational members display their tendencies to refrain from or get involved in judging others' opinions, beliefs and/or traditions. Individuals being able to hold multiple perspectives and stay detached from all of them, is a sign not only of reflexive ability but also breadth of mind. If the breadth of their perspectives is accompanied by the depth of their feelings, it means that usually intellectual understanding of the need for quality and justice is accompanied by the feeling of deep compassion towards those who suffer. And, finally, spirituality is recognised in individuals who transcend self-interest and fulfil the life purpose which is inclusive of others. They tend to equate success with making a positive difference in the world or serving the world through their love and actions. Material things for such people usually are the means for achieving the higher purpose and the goal for its own sake:

What's happening to me now is an integration of my creative, curious side and the one of achieving, getting on in the world and getting money I need. I am hugely hungry for money but for me it is a way of creating purposeful life. Money is a way of helping me go overseas for my transpersonal psychology training which is all about me staying on purpose of helping people transform. (Marina)

In the model of spiritual presence (Figure 5) lies an answer to how spirituality is achieved. Again, rich data necessitated complex inductive process, with results arising from the local themes to the category of the 'volitional integration'. In other

words, while maturity is more a result of work on oneself and/or the environment's influence, when certain characteristics and qualities are manifested through one's behaviours, attitudes and emotional reactions, volitional integration is an active tool to achieve such manifestation. Specifically, the model suggests that, to achieve spirituality such factors as development of faith, as well as social application of spiritual values and beliefs, are important. The central concept of achieving spirituality is one's spiritual commitment.

Clearly, rhetorical expression of spirituality is not sufficient either to manifest or achieve spirituality, as data in this study demonstrates. For instance, the explicitness and abundance of spiritual rhetoric often was at odds with the maturity aspects of organisational members. Vick reignited his Christian religion involvement recently. And, in spite of seeing himself as a compassionate and devout religious person, he doesn't display disagreement with the beliefs and spiritual choices of his colleagues in an 'open-mind', non-judgemental manner. On the contrary, his disagreement takes the form of mockery and ridicule:

I have a real problem with the feelings of angels and this nice fluffy white feeling. I mean..[all these] energy forces [by which] you can basically explain all of their irrational feelings... People say, 'I was touched', 'I felt so .. so great, the angels were around me...'...They can walk around and say: 'You know, I had this vision, this amazing vision', and all the rest...Now. As far as I am concerned, people don't have visions. If they do, something is going on [gestures near his temple as an indicator of insanity]. (Vick)

The focus of commitment also plays an important role in enhancing one's maturity. For instance, the majority of the consulting leaders displayed broad commitment to their spiritual path rather than to a specific tradition. They use religions and modalities as tools to deepen their spiritual path, which, in the end, becomes a limitation, as not a single individual with a broad commitment could display a spiritual quality of maturity (with the deepest awareness and reflexivity, deep experiences of compassion and acceptance, stoic long-term service to communities, and so forth). It was a deep, long-term commitment to one tradition, which created shifts for individuals to truly transcend the limitations of their personalities and become an integral 'wave' of the communal 'sea', paraphrasing Zohar's (1990) analogy between quantum physics and human psyche an individual needs to be fully autonomous (a particle) and yet simultaneously

transcend this autonomy to be of service and a part of a community (a wave).

## CONCLUSIONS

With the dominance of positivist thinking in management, drawing attention to the subjective world of organisational members as a valid reality of organisational life enhances the subjectivist movement in management discourse, most prominent in MSR discourse (Krahnke, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2003). The significance of the study lies both in theoretical and empirical spheres of organisational science.

A key conclusion of this study is that spirituality strongly influences the person's understanding of the organisation. Spiritual presence, formed through manifestation of maturity and volitional attempts to become spiritual, actively shapes the views on the organisation and its processes by organisational members.

Another important conclusion is the interdependence between the manifestation of maturity and an individual's focus to achieve spirituality. One's spiritual commitment is a strong driver for increasing maturity. On the other hand, the state of one's maturity also tests and influences one's volitional attempts to become spiritual.

The introduction of maturity as a spiritual concept

formulates yet another significant conclusion: when ontologically human beings are considered spiritual (potentially divine), the separation between psychology and spirituality becomes artificial. Conceptually it is hard to accept that psychological and spiritual are both different but also the same sides of the human psyche. While psychological growth and development from birth to adulthood, with its distinct stages of development (Piaget, 1972) is widely accepted in psychological discourse, and maturity is considered an expression of psychological growth, increasingly literature merges maturity and spirituality (Ahmadi, 1998; Froehlich, Fialkowski, Scheers, C.Wilcox, & Lawrence, 2006; Mattis, 2002; Smither & Khorsandi, 2009; Walker & Pitts, 1998).

Juxtaposing the existing literature on maturity, spirituality, and organisation, generates extensive recommendations for future research. Dominant is the need to juxtapose the categories of maturity and volitional integration to identify types of spiritual identities. Exploring further how individuals with four different mindsets form the relationship with their organisations is also important. Such research would help to validate and create better understanding of the subjective life of organisations as expressed through the spirituality of their members.



**Ekaterina Zhuravleva** has had diverse international work experience in the field of management. Her research interest is in the area of organisational spirituality. Ekaterina is currently completing her PhD on the topic of 'Recognising workplace spirituality through organisational members' experiences of growth: A humanistic-hermeneutic perspective' at Macquarie Graduate School of Management (MGSM), Australia. She holds an MBA degree with distinction (Charles Sturt University), and a postgraduate diploma with Distinction in 'Modern Economics, Business and Entrepreneurship' (Stockholm School of Economics). Ekaterina works as a Research Associate at MGSM. Ekaterina can be contacted by email at [ekaterina.zhuravleva@mgsm.edu.au](mailto:ekaterina.zhuravleva@mgsm.edu.au).



**Professor Elizabeth More** is Foundation Executive Dean of the Faculty of Business at the Australian Catholic University. Previously she was Macquarie University's Academic Director of Macquarie City and Professor of Management, Macquarie Graduate School of Management (MGSM), following a five-year period as Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Macquarie and Canberra Universities. Prior to these positions, she was Director of the MGSM, Chair of Academic Senate at Macquarie University, and Managing Director of MGSM Pty Ltd. Professor More has given conference presentations and published widely, both locally and internationally, in the field of organisation studies, particularly in the areas of organisational change, communication, culture, and knowledge management; and is on numerous international editorial boards, including *The Australian Journal of Communication*; *Knowledge*; and *Process Management*. Email: [elizabeth.more@mgsm.edu.au](mailto:elizabeth.more@mgsm.edu.au)

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