

# Using Spiritual Intelligence to Transform Organisational Cultures

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## Abstract

Recently spirituality has become a viable topic of discussion for management scholars seeking a means to enhance work cultures and improve organisational effectiveness. However, the path from spirituality to transforming organisational culture is not immediately obvious. Fortunately, several authors have developed frameworks that provide connections. In particular, the notion of spiritual intelligence (SI hereafter) is helpful. This paper begins by describing spirituality and SI in the context of organisational transformation. It then details research involving working professionals that sought to answer the question: "How (and why) might SI transform organisational culture to be more ethical?" It concludes with discussion and implications of developing and practicing SI in organisational contexts.

**Key Words:** Spirituality, Spiritual Intelligence, Organisational Culture

## Introduction

Recently spirituality has become a viable topic of discussion for management scholars seeking a means to enhance work cultures and improve organisational ethicality (Berry, 2013; Fawcett, Brau, Rhoads, & Whitlark, 2008). However, the path from spirituality to transforming organisational culture is not immediately obvious, especially given the multiple understandings of spirituality and the many varied organisational contexts for spiritual action (Cowan, 2005). Fortunately, several authors have developed frameworks that provide connections between spirituality and organisations. In particular, Emmons (1999, 2000) notion of spiritual intelligence (SI hereafter) is helpful here. This paper begins by describing spirituality and SI in the context of organisational transformation. It then details research involving working professionals that sought to answer the question: "How (and why) might SI transform organisational culture to be more ethical?" It concludes with discussion and implications of developing and practicing SI in organisational contexts.

## Background

### What is spirituality?

Spirituality is mystery. Consequently, it resists classification (Gibbons, 2000). As a construct, spirituality is broader than and different from religion (Nelson, 2009), although for many people it has religious aspects (Hill et al., 2000). The literature in this field suggests spirituality comprises at least four broad elements (Sheep, 2006). Spirituality is about connectedness with others (Howard & Welbourn, 2004) including one's Ultimate Concern (Ferguson, 2010). Spirituality also incorporates a meaning-making aspect which enables individuals to make sense of their world while providing direction, often in relationship to something greater than the self (Frankl, 2000; Lips-Wiersma, 2001). Transcendence is also an idea throughout the literature. It involves rising above psychological and physical conditions to achieve one's spiritual ends (Reich, Oser, & Scarlett, 1999; Torrance, 1994). Finally, spiritual-

ity is concerned with one's inner life as it develops towards a more mature spirituality and an improved eudaimonic (i.e., flourishing) state (Cottingham, 2005; Van Dierendonck & Mohan, 2006).

Another frequent idea within the literature is that all human beings are (or have the capacity to be) spiritual (Emmons, 1999; Moberg, 2002; Wigglesworth, 2013). A consequence of this is that the whole person, including their spirituality, reports for work (Sheep, 2006). Work is an essential aspect of being human and can enhance the value of our lives. It is not surprising then that these two distinct areas are related. Certainly, this association has existed for a long time (Benefiel, Fry & Geigle, 2014) although our current understandings of SAW are sourced in the work of Max Weber (1905/1976), whose Protestant Work Ethic and its underlying religious beliefs and values encouraged the development of Western capitalism (Bell & Taylor, 2004), and in early organisation theory authors such as Mary Parker Follet & Abraham Maslow who advocated that enlightened management takes "religion seriously, profoundly, deeply and earnestly" (Maslow, 1998, p. 83). Since the 1980's several demographic and socio-cultural shifts have further exacerbated this interest in spirituality both in general and at work (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Marques, Dhiman & King, 2007; Nadesan, 1999).

Before progressing, it is pertinent to recognise the difference between individual and organisational spirituality. At the individual level, research has focussed on intrapersonal spiritual experiences (Kolodinsky, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2008; Sheep, 2006). Such a view presumes one's spirituality influences behaviour as well as how one interprets and responds to the workplace. At this level, authors often detail the ways organisational practices may promote the spiritual experiences of employees (Pfeffer, 2003). At a collective level, spirituality is analysed in a similar manner to "organisational culture" or "organisational strategy". Logic dictates, however, that any spiritual culture stems from individuals within that culture. The organisation's mission, vision, policies and procedure simply reflect this. Consequently, both

individual and collective spirituality is sourced within a person's internal substance (Konz & Ryan, 2000; Marques, Dhiman & King, 2005). It is conceivable for a person to be spiritual in their workplace without their organisation being so but it is implausible that an organisation's culture would be spiritual without spiritual individuals functioning within it. Therefore, whenever the terms "spirituality" or "spiritual intelligence" occur in this paper they refer to individual persons exercising their spirituality (individual level) and the influence of that spirituality in an organisation (collective level) unless otherwise stated.

### What is spiritual intelligence?

The broad discussion above serves the purpose of defining and situating spirituality within a work context. It does not, however, provide much guidance as to how spirituality might be applied in practice and/or how it might be utilised for organisational ends. Cowan (2005), noting this lack of tangibility, advocates "using frameworks of spiritual intelligence [to] provide more substantive leverage points for developing legitimate connections to organisational effectiveness and leadership development" (p. 8).

There are a number of prominent frameworks which might be useful (see e.g. King & DeCicco, 2009; Vaughn, 2002; Wigglesworth, 2013; Wolman, 2001; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). However, many conflate the phenomenological (i.e. the interior experience of spirituality) with the practical (i.e. the application of spirituality) (Mayer, 2000) and are difficult to apply to organisational life (Cowan, 2005). This research sought a framework that avoided such blurring and that allowed practical application to business. Consequently, it employed Emmons' (1999, 2000) conception of SI.

Emmons observes that adaptive problem solving and goal attainment, using a set of specific competencies, are central to many definitions of intelligence (see e.g. Gardner, 1993; Sternberg, 1997). Using this idea as a basis, he argues spirituality, along with its more esoteric meanings, also constitutes a set of specific capabilities and skills and thus, may be conceptualised in adaptive, cognitive-motivational terms and which "may underlie a variety of problem solving skills relevant to everyday life situations" (p. 8). Spirituality taps into a body of expert knowledge that pertains to the sacred. This provides a rich source of information for individuals that can be utilised to cope with and/or solve problems. If spirituality is the search for meaning then SI is a set tools that utilises such expertise to achieve a more meaningful life (Steingard & Dufresne, 2013). Similar to other forms of intelligence (see e.g. Gardner, 1993), SI is stronger or weaker in different people, and can be developed proficiently through study and practice (Emmons, 1999, 2000). This emphasis on learning, adaptability and problem solving open up avenues for application into organisations (Cowan, 2005).

Emmons' (1999, 2000) SI includes five core abilities (see Table 1 above). The first two of these "deal with the capacity of the person to engage in heightened or extraordinary forms of consciousness" (p. 10). Transcendence involves going beyond the normal bounds of our physical environment to relate to our Ultimate Concern (Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf & Saunders, 1988; Frankl, 2000; Torrance, 1994). It can also involve increased conscious awareness, peak experiences and being in a state of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Solomon, 2002). Mysticism is the sense of deep connectedness with the transcendent experienced as oneness, love and perfect [moral] action (Grof, 1998; Shakun, 1999). According to Emmons, individuals with elevated SI are better at entering into these states of consciousness.

1.	The capacity to transcend the physical and the material
2.	The ability to experience heightened states of consciousness
3.	The ability to sanctify everyday experience
4.	The ability to utilise spiritual resources to solve problems
5.	The capacity to be virtuous

Table 1. Emmons (1999, 2000) Core Components of Spiritual Intelligence

The third ability, sanctification, involves setting something apart for a sacred purpose (Emmons, 1999, 2000). Seeing the sacred in the ordinary is an aspect of all the world's major spiritualities (Ferguson, 2010) and can have important organizational consequences. For example, Paloutzian, Emmons, & Keortge (2003) found that when employees saw their work as sacred, it took on a new meaning. Similarly, for participants in Neal's (2000) study, "work was a constant communion with something greater than themselves" (p. 1320) which meant making a difference through one's labour. Classifying sanctification in intelligence terms means viewing it as an expertise that individuals bring to real-life situations that enables them to prioritise spiritual goals over secular ones (Emmons, 1999, 2000; Emmons, Cheung & Tehrani, 1998). Research has found individuals who orientate their lives around spiritual ends often experience higher levels of well-being (Bolghan-Abadi, Ghofrani & Abde-Khodaei, 2014; Fave, Bardar, Vella-Brodrick & Wissing, 2013; Paloutzian et al., 2003).

The fourth ability involves utilising spiritual resources to solve problems and cope with adversity. Pargament et al. (1988) contend that spirituality helps individuals make sense of, cope with, and solve "challenging life events by offering guidance, support and hope" (p. 91). Along with Koenig & Perez (2000), Pargament has developed a framework addressing the many ways in which spirituality achieves this. For example, spirituality helps reframe appraised meanings of stressors (Park, 2005). It also enables individuals to reprioritise goals, which is a sign of intelligence, while helping them gain mastery over difficult circumstances. As Park notes, strategies such as prayer or fasting encourage reappraisal of stressful situations in ways that enhance feelings of control. Naturally, the degree to which a person exercises this ability reflects the strength of their spirituality (Pargament et al., 2000).

The final component of SI is "the capacity to be virtuous on a consistent basis: to show forgiveness, to express gratitude, to exhibit humanity, to be compassionate, and to display sacrificial love" (Emmons, 2000, p. 12). Virtues are acquired habitual traits that motivate us to behave in certain ways that aim at the good. They permeate our being and influence us to act. Their teleological nature ensures individuals develop virtuously as they strive for ultimate ends (i.e., that which is good). Together, these ensure such persons lead flourishing lives (Flynn, 2008; Foot, 2001; Hursthouse, 1999; Hutchinson, 1995). Although the inclusion of this last element in a theory of intelligence is controversial (Mayer, 2000), there is evidence suggesting the exercise of virtue in daily living is more often than not the intelligent thing to do (Koehn, 2000; Roberts & Wood, 2007; Zagzebski, 1996). While the virtues listed above are not exhaustive, they are broadly reflective of the spirituality literature (Emmons, 1999, 2000; Ferguson, 2010). There is also strong link between spirituality and virtues in the management literature (see e.g. Cavanagh & Bandsuch, 2002; Dyck & Wong, 2010; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008; Schmidt-Wilk, Heaton & Steingard, 2000).

Importantly, SI satisfies Howard Gardner's three primary criteria for being considered an intelligence. It is "a set of char-

acteristic mental abilities that are distinct from preferred behaviours, the facilitation of adaptation and problem solving, and development over a lifespan" (cited in Steingard & Dufresne, 2013, p. 460). Each core ability explains the pertinent terrain of SI while yet remaining tentative. As Cowan (2005) notes, "frameworks such as these offer compelling starting points for consideration and investigation, but they do not yet offer clear prescriptions" (p. 11). There has been scant research to date on SI and organisations with questions such as "how might this manifest itself in a workplace?", "what benefits might it bring to an organisation?" and "how do we measure these?" yet to be answered. This paper addresses some of these demands.

### Spirituality & organisational transformation

Giacalone & Jurkiewicz (2003) have noted the plethora of writing exploring the relationship between spirituality and organisational culture and performance. However, they observe, that at times this has been controversial and confusing. Karakas (2010), writing in response to this claim, provides a useful rubric that classifies the literature into three broad themes. The first of these, the human resources perspective, contends spirituality improves employee wellness and work life quality (see e.g. Kutcher, Bragger, Rodriguez-Srednicki & Masco, 2010; Marschke, Preziosi & Harrington, 2011; Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson, 2003). The second of Karakas' (2010) themes, sense of meaning and purpose, has spirituality providing greater meaning in and through work (see e.g. Markow & Klenke, 2005; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Pandey, Gupta & Arora, 2009). The final aspect, sense of community and connectedness, involves spirituality contributing to an improved workplace community and enhanced belonging within the organization (see e.g. Crawford, Hubbard, Lonis-Shumate & O'Neill, 2009; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Kolodinsky et al., 2008).

Karakas (2010) asserts combining these three criteria results in "spirited workplaces engaged with passion, alive with meaning and connected with compassion" (p. 98). While there is support for Karakas' claim, much of the literature is still conceptual (Pawar, 2009; Sass, 2000). That which does explore concrete relations between spirituality and organisational outcomes tends to be instrumental and quantitative in nature since enterprises want empirical proof that spirituality improves the bottom line (Fornaciari & Dean, 2009; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Moreover, while much has been written about the role of spirituality in managing adversity and solving problems (Hood, Hill & Spilka, 2009; Pargament, Ano & Wachholtz, 2005; Park, 2005), little has been composed exploring how individuals qualitatively live out, (i.e. actually use) their spirituality in challenging and difficult work contexts and the ethical benefits of such action. What qualitative research does exist is not based typically on an established conceptual framework such as Emmons' (1999, 2000) nor does it normally target adverse organisational situations (see e.g., Fernando & Jackson, 2006; Neal, 2000; Sass, 2000; Zhuravleva & More, 2010). Grounding this research in Emmons' (1999, 2000) SI framework enlarges the concept of spirituality to encompass meanings not typically associated with it. "Spiritual intelligence enhances the plausibility of a scientific spirituality by locating it within an existing acceptable psychological framework, one that has proven to be extremely useful in understanding the common ground between personality and behavior. It allows spirituality to become anchored to rational approaches...that emphasize goal attainment and problem solving (p. 174)".

With this in mind, this paper explores how professionals, in a variety of organisations, used their spiritual intelligence to

cope with and solve challenging ethical dilemmas. The benefits of this is a gradual "transformation of organisations' dominant schema" (Gull & Doh, 2004, p. 129) as individuals realise their spirituality in their organisations.

## Research design

### Method

This study was part of wider research which utilised critical realism overall as its philosophical foundation. Critical realism shifts the focus away from evident outcomes towards a causal account for these outcomes (Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen & Karlsson, 1997). The goal of critical realism is to identify factors that help produce outcomes – it is about explaining the "why" and the "how" as opposed to the "what". For a critical realist, the social world is as real as the physical one, although this can never be proven completely (Easton, 2010). As such, critical realism is well suited for studying social constructs such as spirituality and/or intelligence, both of which have causal power in the real world (Archer, Collier, & Porpora, 2004; Emmons, 1999, 2000; Fleetwood & Ackroyd, 2004). Critical realism is particularly useful if the emphasis of the research is to provide "a convincing causal account in terms of theory" (Kearins, Luke & Corner, 2004, p. 43).

If SI results in significant outcomes, then investigating its transformational power in organisations requires the examination of certain types of cases that best demonstrate this phenomenon in that context (Danermark et al., 1997). As part of a wider study, professionals were surveyed using Howden's (1992) Spirituality Assessment Scale<sup>1</sup>. Individuals who scored high on this 28-item scale (i.e., above 113), indicating a strong degree of spirituality, were selected for this study. Consequently, the sample consisted of 20 professionals from a variety of demographic and organisational contexts. Using a high spirituality score ensured these individuals were strong cases and were thus, more likely to use spirituality in their daily work lives (Spohn, 1997; Weaver & Agle, 2002). Professionals were selected for this study for several reasons. First, there is a strong association between spirituality and human flourishing, which itself is an idea inherent to the professions (Coady & Block, 1996; Oakley & Cocking, 2001). Second, professionals often exercise more influence than non-professionals; they have "special knowledge and training" and other people are often "rendered especially vulnerable or dependent in their relationship to the practice of the professional" (Blackburn & McGhee, 2004, p. 91). Finally, while business itself is not necessarily a profession, it is often replete with professionals (Lawrence, 1999).

### Data analysis

Twenty interviews, of approximately 90 minutes each, were conducted over a two month period. Interviews are commonly used in critical realist studies (Fleetwood & Ackroyd, 2004), as they are in workplace spirituality research (Benefiel, 2007). They provide a useful means of investigating underlying causes since they focus on meaningful social action which provides rich descriptive data of the interviewee and their context (Ackroyd, 2004). The aim of this study involved understanding how professionals used their SI to cope with adversity and solve problems and thus influence their organisational cultures for the better. Consequently, participants were asked describe incidents within the last 2 years where an ethical dilemma oc-

<sup>1</sup> While Howden's (1992) scale is order, it is not specific to any religion and it comprises four themes found commonly in the spirituality literature. Hence, it has good construct validity and reliability.

curred, to discuss their response to that dilemma and explain any outcomes. They were then asked several questions about these incidents in relationship to their spirituality. Ethical dilemmas were selected because of their potential for harm (or adversity) to the individual, the organisation and/or society and their often conflicting obligations that require significant problem solving ability. As a result of this process, 54 incidents of varying types were identified and discussed (see Table 2 below). Finally, participants were asked a series of questions about how and why spirituality might affect their organisations in general.

BROAD DESCRIPTOR	TYPES OF INCIDENT
<i>Conflicts of Interest</i>	E.g., conflicting values between persons or between persons and the organisation, and between basic principles and the need to achieve an outcome
<i>Dishonesty</i>	E.g., fraud, theft, lack of transparency, not honouring commitments, and misrepresentation of the facts
<i>Exploitation</i>	E.g., discrimination, unfair working conditions, health and safety issues, unsafe or poor quality products, taking unfair advantage of one's position, bullying, bribery, indirect harm to others, and harm to the environment
<i>Privacy</i>	E.g., breaching confidentiality, privacy, and lack of informed consent

Table 2. Types of Ethical Dilemmas Described in This Research

Data from these interviews were organised in files using NVivo 10 and this particular study a deductive thematic analysis was performed. A deductive approach means coding and theme development are directed by existing concepts or ideas (Boyatzis, 1998). In this instance, Emmons's (1999, 2000) SI framework provided the *raison d'être* for this present study. The thematic analysis was an adapted version of Braun & Clarke's (2006) process elaborated in Table 3 below. Theme development was a continual process of rereading and refinement (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2007).

1.	Familiarised with the data: Transcribed three interviews to get the feel for the data; listened to, read and re-read transcripts for accuracy and content.
2.	Coded: Generated codes that identified important features of the data that might be relevant to answering the research question.
3.	Searched for themes: Examined these codes and collated data to match existing concepts within Emmons (1999, 2000) framework.
4.	Reviewed themes: Checked these worked in relation to interviews; refined specifics of each theme and what story the whole analysis told.
5.	Wrote up: Wove together the narrative and data extracts, and contextualised the analysis in relation to existing literature.

Table 3. Deductive Thematic Analysis of Interview Data Adapted from Braun & Clarke (2006).

## Findings

The first of Emmons' SI components involves transcending the physical and material. Such transcendence is a "way of being and experiencing that comes about through an awareness of the transcendent dimension and that is characterised by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life and whatever one considers to be the Ultimate" (Elkins et al., 1988, p. 11). Participants described this capacity using the language of going beyond the norm and/or being part of something bigger than the self.

For example, Arien, a nurse, described it thus when talking about a conflict of interest between her own values and that of the organisation:

You might be physically doing a task or engaging with a problem but it's the energy from spirituality that is bigger; it goes out from more than just where you are. It's a feeling thing, oh I'm trying to put it into words, an experiential thing to me... I guess just being bigger than that instant.

Ulmo, an engineer, uses similar language in conflict of values he had to deal with:

Remain calm. Don't get caught up with the noise, the negative energy. Because if you get caught up in that noise you can waste a lot of time... So trying to go with a definition of spirituality, it is staying with your own [spiritual] thoughts, not letting thoughts come into your head which are negative. Spirituality obviously informs that visualisation, it is a sense of being grounded in something [larger than the self].

Finally, lawyer Romendacil describing an incident of dishonesty, stated an equivalent idea:

As far as my spirituality is concerned whatever happens there's a much greater scheme of things and God is in control and he's assisting me and he's looking after me. So it's not a fatalistic response it's just a hope I guess that you know I can get through all this. I can, even if I suffer through it...I still have a hope that whatever happens in the great scheme of things, is going to work out for the good.

The second of Emmons' components involves experiencing heightened states of consciousness. This ability manifests as feelings of connectedness with others and one's Ultimate Other. As Fernando & Jackson (2006) note, the interconnected nature of the self with others (and creation) points towards a transcendent reality. A similar idea was postulated by Martin Buber (1970) with his notion of I and Thou. Participants described this ability as being consciously aware of others (including their Ultimate Other).

As a clinical psychologist, Maglor brought this ability to several incidents he described. In summing up his view of how spirituality helped deal with these challenging situations, he stated:

When I practise spirituality, I feel a sense of connectedness, yeah to God, and I guess the whole spirit, the Wairoa, but also to others. This enables me to love my neighbour, to try and treat them as I want to be treated, and you know, to love all of God's creation.

From a teaching incident involving exploitation, Elwing connected to others and God through her actions:

It's about feeling connected to God and I think that by projecting good things into these kids' lives and projecting positivity and helping them to get to their potential then I am doing that...and that is what God's wants us to do, to make the world a better place not worse. It's about the greater good and connecting more with God through the world by doing Godly actions.

Finally, engineer Zamin articulated a similar connection in one of the incidents she discussed:

Well spirituality has to do with life and karma and to some extent religion, but [this is] not always the case, and the connectedness of life in the world and the sense that there's more to a person than just a body and a mind, that there's the soul connected to something else... Well it's funny because I don't sort of wake up in the morning and think I'm a spiritual person, I'm going to live a spiritual day today. Rather, at certain moments throughout the day or week I feel connected to something bigger than myself and that helps me survive.

The third SI component involves seeing the sacred in our everyday living. According to Frankl (2000), individuals find meaning by experiencing their Ultimate Concern through what they do and/or by standing up in the face of potential adversity. For Duffy (2010), this means spiritual people understand their work has existential significance. Taking these, and similar ideas together, suggests spiritually sanctified work takes on new meaning and differing outcomes (see e.g., Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Word, 2012). This ability was evident in many of the participant responses.

For instance, Neo-Natal Nurse Lúthien dealing with a conflict of values, was able to sanctify the situation in a way that resulted in a positive outcome for her and the organisation:

I think nursing for me is more than just a job. It is a chance to kind of live out my beliefs and my spirituality. And I believe my babies really deserve the best and that's me living out my [spiritual] life.

As an engineer, Salmar sanctifies his work and the ethical challenges that go with it, in order to achieve his long-term spiritual goals:

My long term vision is to work in third world countries and help build infrastructure. So one of the reason's I came to [deleted] was because they do a lot of infrastructure in big engineering projects...I don't know exactly where I'm gonna end up; I just know that this door was opened for me at exactly the right time and I'm in the right place to develop... and I just feel like God's honing my skills [and] abilities in these types of situations so that I can go and do some work overseas. So there's definitely a bigger picture for me.

Finally, Architect Rumil articulated comparable ideas in summing up how he dealt with the incidents he described:

I mean it's [spirituality] the whole point, when it comes down to it it's the whole point of being really. Obviously I'm providing for a family and all the rest of it but the satisfaction I get out of working, out of dealing with stuff like we discussed... The reason I'm doing this is because I'm acting out, I have power in terms of those [spiritual] values that we're talking about – I can make a difference.

The fourth component has individuals using spiritual resources to solve problems. Spirituality has been shown to influence organisational decision-making through both normative principles and values (see e.g., Fernando & Jackson, 2006; Jackson, 1999; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Parboteeah, Hoegl & Cullen, 2008; Phipps, 2012). Moreover, as Lips-Wiersma (2001) argues, spirituality performs a sense-making role. This ongoing rational process is about understanding the work context in a way that “forms cognitive maps of one's environment,

including standards and rules for perceiving, interpreting, believing and acting” (p. 500).

As a Director of a large consultancy, Galdor dealt with a conflict between his company's need to maximise profit and serving the wider public good. Note the connection he makes between spirituality and decision-making, how imbued spiritual “principles” guided his conduct, and the reference to spirituality being an ability (i.e., intelligence):

It's [spirituality] probably a higher wisdom or principle that really that's what you should do...I think its core to who I am. Yeah it's kind of like a guiding force or something like that. I [also] think that to some extent it's an ability. And actually people don't share that ability equally. Like some people can't paint and some people can't play music – some people unfortunately can't get spiritual issues.

Charge nurse Silmarien was involved in an issue of exploitation. As part of her response to questions about this, she described using spiritual resources, highlighted their connection with her thinking, and her ability to make the right choice:

There's the Ten Commandments and some of those have been embedded into laws. I know that those laws are there in the back of my mind and they probably help with my moral thoughts...I see that linkage with spirituality and my thinking, I think that's helping me to make the right choices with making plans and putting things in place to try and see if we can move this forward.

As a final example, teacher Deor talked about an inherent spiritual capacity that guided his conscious thinking regarding an incident involving exploitation:

So many places you look in the world it's unconscious choices and they're causing suffering, you know, so trying to be [spiritually] mindful, and trying to get into the habit of being [spiritually] mindful or being conscious in everything you do...So I'm always trying to be conscious of that; what's the purpose of this? And so I think that it [spirituality] really does inform my decisions here.

The final component of SI is the capacity to be virtuous. The virtues combine right reason, emotion and will to aim at eudaimonic ends (Annas, 2006). In this framework, they are an outworking of connecting with others, striving for one's Ultimate Concern and using spiritual resources (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008; Spohn, 1997). In other words, virtues are, at least partially, about individuals being true to their spirituality and putting it into real-life practice. Emmons (1999, 2000) identifies several key virtues common to spirituality. Many of these were reflected in participant responses to the incidents they described.

Nessa encapsulates what being virtuous involves when dealing with peers and students in complex ethical situations. In particular, note the link between spirituality and wisdom (one of Emmons' virtues) and how this, in turn, leads to compassion (another of Emmons' virtues):

I think the fact that you stop, think and consider rather than react. I think that's really important. It's about making sure that you're wise about what you state you will do and being aware not to over promise or put yourself in a situation that would then be unethical on behalf of either the parent or the child. [As a consequence,] I feel like I approach situations and people

and perhaps in my teaching students, with compassion or grace about situations. And in a sense that's probably a spiritual model.

For engineer Cirdan, it became important to demonstrate forgiveness in a situation where he felt exploited:

I really wanted her [the client] to approve the application. To say, yes this was a good project, and yes I agree with that. But, because she withheld that, I felt like my integrity had been impugned...On a spiritual level, how I dealt with that, the loss of good feeling was what interests me most about this. I was able to find a way to overcome the loss and forgive her...I applied my spirituality to the whole thing by trying as best I could to give her what she asked for.

Finally, in an incident where Melian dealt with a potential conflict of values that was not ultimately resolved, she stated both the need to be thankful and to forgive:

I've learned to be thankful because I can't change it. So my spirituality now basically influences me in that I've let go. I've forgiven anything that they have screwed up on and I've just let go of it because you can't hold onto the past otherwise it holds you down...There was still an abusive power that wasn't dealt with, my spiritual belief says God will be dealing with it anyway! Yep, basically I put it in a larger context and handed it over to God in some sense.

The above components, and evidential support, suggest SI is a linear process that happens in advancing steps or phases. However, nothing could be further from the truth. SI is in fact, an "integrative framework for understanding the salutary effects of spirituality on psychological, physical and interpersonal outcomes" (Emmons, 2000, p. 175). If anything, the application of this holistic construct occurs simultaneously in any given context. While the description above is linear and temporal, the reality is that all of these components were in play repeatedly and concurrently when participants engaged with these incidents in their organisational contexts.

As Emmons' notes, viewing spirituality this way ensures that individuals bring to any given situation an active, dynamic property. Spirituality is not just something, it does something; it "provides an interpretive context for addressing important concerns in daily life, and enables researchers to address the doing side of spirituality as well as the being side" (p. 176). What might be the benefits to an organisation of professionals exercising such an intelligence? The next section addresses this question.

## Discussion & implications

While spirituality has been shown to correlate positively with a number of organisational constructs (Karakas, 2010), much of this literature is conceptual and quantitative (Fornaciari & Dean, 2001; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). While it suggests significant benefits, these are difficult to qualitatively prove. What might be the actual advantages of professionals enacting their spiritual intelligence in the workplace? This research identified two broad gains.

### Enhanced practice

Sanctifying one's work ensured participants' often went beyond merely instrumental goals. Their spirituality provided a reason

for working, and helped them comprehend the necessity of their actions and the positive difference they could make in the world (Paloutzian et al., 2003). *Prima facie*, such meaningfulness seems connected intimately with moral living (Bruner, 1990; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). For example, behaviour that serves a common good and/or strives for community enhances meaning (Milliman et al., 2003; Neck & Milliman, 1994). Actions that serve others and/or the divine (Delbecq, 1999; Neal, 2000) also provide a greater sense of purpose. As these professionals lived out their spirituality, they understood how their actions affected those around them based on an existential awareness of the importance of their conduct (Duffy, 2010; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). Failing to view labour in this manner can encourage feelings of meaninglessness and emptiness. Such emotions may lead to increased absenteeism, less organisational commitment and increased likelihood of unethical behaviour (Karakas, 2010; Rozuel & Kakabadse, 2010).

Another aspect of this enhanced practice had these professionals' using their SI to reframe challenging work situations in ways that reflected spiritual values and goals. Typically, human beings have limited ability to make optimal choices in complex environments. Since we have imperfect calculative capacity and inadequate access to information about the context in which the decision is to be made, we strive for a level of satisfaction that is good enough (Beach, 1997). For ethical dilemmas this may involve taking the lesser of two evils (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau & Thoma, 1999), if indeed one is able to make moral choices at all (Darley, 1996; Jackall, 1988). In this research, however, participants went beyond the bounds of normal rational decision-making. As an inherent aspect of being, SI operated through participant thinking, feeling and acting. This ensured more holistic thought processes, a deeper appreciation of stakeholders, and ultimately, better ethical decision-making. Decision alternatives were not seen as burdens but rather, as options to be considered through spiritual lenses. Such reframing meant less egocentrism and more of an emphasis on the shared good (Shakun, 2001). Interestingly, failing to enact SI may be "experienced as separateness, fear, and non-connected action" (p. 33). Individuals evidence this through rational self-interest and the need for control. Again, this encourages unethical conduct since it limits value choices, makes means more important than ends and tends to exclude externalities from decision-making (Moore, 2008).

The consequence of these enhanced practices is improved ethicality in an organisation's culture. Many organisations externalise the costs of being moral. When they are concerned with morality, their focus is usually on symptoms not core issues (R. A Giacalone, 2004). Connecting one's spirituality with one's work produces certain values that go beyond superficial morality. The more these are enacted, the more spiritual, and ultimately ethical, an organisation's culture may become (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004). Spiritually intelligent individuals generally make improved choices and find new ways to surmount workplace challenges. This shifts the focus to long-term goals and a broader stakeholder approach. Such individuals help organisations go beyond business as usual and inspire a greater and more adaptive role in society.

Several data extracts taken from participant interviews are provided in support of this implication:

When I look at the culture of the ward when I started and the culture of the ward now, it's a very different place. But it's a very different place because of things I have been able to stop, like using handover as the time where you beat people up because

something wasn't filled in and whatever, and in little ways. And it just starts off a domino effect and people all want to do it. It's not perfect but you know it [spirituality] does make a difference – Arien, Nurse

I think when you have a lot of spiritual people in a place, then they have more strong [pause] their beliefs as to what is right and what is wrong is much more black and white, and they fight for them more strongly. So what I'm saying is, the more spiritual people you have in an organisation, the more strongly the ethics – Melian, Teacher

I take a more a team oriented perspective. You know, from rather than just, "Well how am I gonna get ahead? What am I gonna do to get that next position?" This leads to more, "Well what's best for our clients? "And for society?" It's not just looking out for your own interests but for the interests of others...I guess to me it means that as an employee I'm not only looking out for my interests as an employee but I am saying, "What would the employer want from me?" Therefore, going that extra mile to me makes the organisation a better place – Sador, Privacy Officer

### Enhanced influence

Enabling a spiritual connection to work and enacting associated virtues may create, at best, a different perception of ethicality within the organisation (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004) and, at worst, limit moral disengagement (Bandura, 2002). These actions, in theory at least, could improve the moral conduct of others. Enacting values such as being compassionate, showing forgiveness, demonstrating gratitude and so on (Emmons, 1999, 2000) encourages the development of deeper relationships with others. A consequence of this may be the freedom to speak into another person's life either by word or by deed. Consequently, many of the professionals in this research were spiritual role models setting standards, providing examples and influencing others (Bandura, 2003)

Generally speaking, role modelling involves "transmitting values, attitudes, and behaviours in all types of settings including work" (Weaver, Trevino & Agle, 2005, p. 314). According to Weaver et al., "in the modelling process people identify with another person and internalise the role model's values, behaviors, or attitudes" (p. 314). Essentially, the individual constructs a cognitive representation of their role model in action and aligns their behaviour with that picture in the various situations they encounter. There is evidence that role models can make a considerable difference in the ethical behaviour of others (Trevino, Brown & Hartman, 2003; Trevino, Weaver, Gibson & Toffler, 1999). For instance, Weaver et al. (2005) observed that role models exhibited everyday interpersonal behaviours that built relationships with others. They noted these individuals practise constant ethical action and had high ethical expectations of the self and that such persons articulated ethical standards to those around them on a consistent basis. There are obvious resemblances to the professionals in this research. These individuals built relationships, showed selflessness, care and compassion, and fairness in these organisational incidents. They held themselves to higher norms in their desire to be spiritual. Most importantly, they articulated high standards, which they sourced in their spirituality. They set good moral examples by often putting spirituality above "personal or company interests" and tended to take "a long-term, bigger picture multiple stakeholders approach" (p. 316).

Also of interest was the fact that for many professionals, role modelling was a "side by side" phenomenon. Reflective of Weaver et al.'s (2005) findings that role modelling occurs in the day-to-day interface between organisational members, participants identified daily interaction with staff, colleagues or peers as the primary place they enacted their spiritual intelligence. Weaver et al. suggest people are attracted to role models "through [their] quiet behaviors" (p. 325). These behaviours do not involve controlling others but rather reflect those that are "humble and hardworking, willing to pitch in alongside others, even sacrificing their own interests for the interests of others" (p. 325). These stand out in organisational settings because they run counter to more commonly selfish and self-congratulatory behaviour.

Discussing influences on identity salience, Weaver (2006) contends organisational contexts can cause individuals to suspend their moral identity and assume a role defined by that context. Compartmentalisation and the related process of moral disengagement can occur when one's moral identity is weak (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). A strong organisationally defined identity also encourages depersonalisation as individuals lose sight of their own selves while assuming the identity advocated by the collective.

The key to influencing moral salience in an organisation is the "presence of people who share a particular identity" (Weaver, 2006, p. 353). In other words, the more the organisation consists of spiritually intelligent individuals combined with a culture that is open to the discussion and application of this, the more likely it is to be ethical. Salience is a relative matter. According to Weaver (2006), "identity salience is affected by the depth and frequency of one's involvement with others" (p. 353). Consequently, increased time with spiritual peers may result in a salient identity that adopts similar values and behaviours as part of their identity. Certainly, this is the testimony of participants in this research. Ultimately, such an adoption may counter organisational forces that encourage unethical behaviour.

Again, several data extracts taken from participant interviews are provided in support of implication:

As midwives we're all story-tellers, it's part of what we do. So when you share your stories and find out how other people reacted, that changes the way we deal with situations in the future. And, I know certainly, some of the stories that I've shared have changed the way that midwives behave... And I think some of these stories definitely have a spiritual component to them because when you're talking about life that is the very essence of spirituality isn't it? – Isilme, Midwife

I think about the case we talked about before, with my colleague... I was feeling pressure from her to question or even limit the intervention of this cultural worker. But because of my spiritual beliefs around wanting to be inclusive and compassionate, I said no hang on I know what they're doing, I know where they're going, I've discussed it with them. I think her behaviour was shaped by me taking a [spiritual] stand about being inclusive and acknowledging that this person's perspective [the cultural worker] is valued - Maglor, Psychologist

Sometimes my boss, he'll think about doing things that are unethical with maybe the costing for a project – and we'll actually talk through the whole thing and I'll have quite a lot of input into the final way that the decision's made. And I'll bring up some of the right and wrong issues; you know, "This seems right; this seems wrong", and you know, a lot of the times what I

say is agreed to. So, that's in some sense my spirituality influencing him to dull down his potential excesses – Salmar, Engineer

Given the obvious benefits of enacting SI in the workplace, organisations would be unwise not to encourage employees to be more proactive in this area. This is vital since, as Sheep (2006) notes, any attitudinal and behavioural changes brought about in the workplace are more likely to be a reflection of member's lived spiritual preferences as opposed to managerial design.

Three broad strategies are suggested. First, organisations that provide opportunity and resources for individuals to enact their SI openly are more likely to encourage actions that transform culture for the better (Karakas, 2010; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; Parboteeah & Cullen, 2003). These could include such things as the provision of rooms for prayer or meditation, testimonial meetings, a moment of inner silence during meetings or spiritual support groups (Stoner, 2013). Second, as part of this process, allowing more independent and self-governing structures (Casey, 2002; Pfeffer, 2003), rewarding spiritual praxis, as opposed to incentivising self-interest (McKee, 2003; Stoner, 2013), and matching organisational long-term goals with spiritual ends (e.g. human flourishing, social responsibility or the common good) (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008) will also contribute to this transformation. Third, given the nature of SI, ongoing training can further encourage the development of spiritual skills and capabilities (Emmons, 1999, 2000). As discussed earlier, these include such things as learning to see work within a higher meaning, using spiritual resources like prayer and meditation to solve work problems and developing spiritual sense-making tools to enhance decision-making. Incorporating these as part of any training and development programme is important. For example, many organisations train their employees in the use of mindfulness to reduce stress and improve overall effectiveness (Weick & Putnam, 2006). Being spiritually mindful helps individuals understand their work context better and provides insight into their thinking processes (Baer, 2003;

Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Including spirituality as part of any character education programme would involve going “beyond the teaching of socio-emotional skills to include the basic spiritual competencies and abilities described earlier” (Emmons, 1999, p. 177). For example, Trott (2013) uses an exercise whereby employees first individually, then in a dyad, and finally in groups, are required to collate answers to the following question, “If you had the opportunity to create a spiritually healthy organisation what would you emphasize the most?” (p. 675). This exercise avoids proselytising and theological debate while co-creating shared spiritual values. Once these are determined then a series of extended open interviews (i.e., spiritual conversations with a purpose) are conducted whereby employees discuss, both with the interviewer and their compatriots, about how these values might be put into practice in their work lives. This generates what Trott (2013) labels a “transcendent Hawthorne effect” (p. 682) whereby employees' awareness is raised “through continued conversations and a spiritual vocabulary, with an emphasis on key values, becoming commonplace” (p. 682). This ensures strong connections between lived spirituality and the organisation.

## Conclusion

There is a general consensus between academics, practitioners and managers in the literature for the need to embrace increased spirituality in organisations (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). SI is one way of meeting this need. Its broad appeal too many faiths combined with its practical focus allows it to be developed and utilised in multiple organisational contexts (Cowan, 2005). Indeed, there are good reasons for doing this. Developing and enacting the SI of the participants in this research led to enhanced ethical practice and influence. Such behaviour, spread via a critical mass of authentically spiritual people, is likely to transform organisational cultures for the better (Dehler & Welsh, 1994; Fawcett et al., 2008; Gull & Doh, 2004; Pfeffer, 2003).

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