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2011

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### Recommended Citation

Mackenzie, Maureen L. Ph.D. and Servant, Gilles, "The Value of Spirituality within the Workplace: A Discussion and Proposal for Research" (2011). *Faculty Works: Business*. 20.

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# THE VALUE OF SPIRITUALITY WITHIN THE WORKPLACE: A DISCUSSION AND PROPOSAL FOR RESEARCH

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## ABSTRACT

This paper considers the definitions of workplace spirituality, its value, and how the defining foundational concepts are manifested within organizations today. Also, if there is value, what is the process of educating future leaders so that they are prepared to create and sustain workplace spirituality as part of the cultural fabric of their organizations? Last, there is a call for dialogue between management practitioners and theorists as to whether the phrase, *Workplace Spirituality*, can thrive within the management practitioner's vernacular. Perhaps it is more effective to refer to the workplace spirituality concepts under their covert labels and avoid using the controversial "S" word. **Keywords:** leadership, management, spirituality, religion, manager-employee interaction, organizational behavior, spiritual philosophies.

## INTRODUCTION

The discipline of management has continuously responded to its changing environment. As issues of diversity, gender equality, etc., emerged as social issues, with the potential to influence employee productivity, leadership strategies adapted. For example, years ago a discussion of "stress at work" was perceived as soft, negative, and weak. In a short time the work-stress conversation found its way into mainstream management discussions.

The goals of management have not change; the foundational philosophy of the management discipline is getting the work done, achieving organizational goals, and meeting stakeholder needs. Often companies will suggest that their stakeholders include clients, shareholders, and employees, but employees often have the least influence in the boardroom. Yet, without engaged employees, neither shareholder nor client will be satisfied (Jain 2011).

Management tactics may need to once again respond to recognize the modern worker and the emerging discussion of spirituality and the workplace. (Pawar 2009; Driscoll and McKee 2007; Sheep 2006; Leigh 1997). Essential to this discussion is the understanding that Spirituality is not religion (Leigh 1997). Rather, spirituality is part of the fabric of individuals, and individuals populate organizations. Managers are certainly not expected to become religious leaders, but rather to recognize the need many employees have for meaningful work and to feel connected to

each other and to their environment. (Milliman, Ferguson, Trickett and Condemni 1999; Pawar 2009; Sheep 2006).

This paper considers the definitions of workplace spirituality (WS), lessons gained from the spiritual philosophies, the value of WS, and how the defining WS foundational concepts are manifested within organizations today. Also, if there is value, what is the process of educating future leaders so that they are prepared to create and sustain workplace spirituality as part of the cultural fabric of their organizations?

## BACKGROUND

Workplace spirituality emerged with perceivable interest in the early 1990s with books and articles published in respected journals, such as: *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *Journal of Management Education*, and *Journal of Organizational Change Management* (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2010). The introduction of the Special Interest Group (SIG), *Management, Spirituality, and Religion*, within the Academy of Management, provided a respected venue for emerging research.

Pawar's (2009) research identified four foundational concepts upon which workplace spirituality can stand. They are Transformational leadership, Organizational Citizenship Behaviors, Organizational Support, and Procedural Justice. Pawar tracked these four concepts back to their founding disciplines, then their emergence in the field of Organizational Behavior, and finally linked them together within the emerging discipline of Workplace Spirituality (WS). Pawar's findings place WS as an important sub-discipline of the well-established discipline of Organizational Behavior.

Giacalone and Jurkiewicz show the research links between WS and other disciplines. The links include: Agency theory (self direction, individual existence), Ethics and social responsibility (moral behavior), Materialism (importance of possessions), Work values (importance given to particular work-related outcomes), Workaholism (excessive time spent at work which leads to detrimental life outcomes), Servant leadership (leadership that serves others), and Work-life balance (establishing greater equality in time spent at work and home), to name a few. (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2010, 17-18).

Leigh (1997) highlights stories of corporate programs and CEO testimony that suggests that "there is a new connection happening in many organizations between employees and management that is resulting in a happier workforce and real bottom-line improvements." (Leigh 1997, 26). Briskin suggests that "soul and self are inextricably linked to who we are both inside and outside of the workplace" (Cohen 1997, 57).

On the other hand, Pava (2003) concluded, after the review of popular books on WS, that satisfactory models of legitimate workplace spirituality have *not* been found because of the restrictive definitions of spirituality. Unfortunately, spirituality is too closely linked to religion, which has no place in the business world. Some feel that drawing spirituality into the workplace is divisive, excludes those who are not part of a particular tradition, can cause abuses, and may

lead to the manipulation of employees (Mitroff and Denton 1999; Karakas 2010, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2010).

Separating workplace spirituality (WS) from religion has been a strong focus within the literature. Giacalone and Jurkiewicz stress that WS must be separated from the “faith blanket in which it is frequently cloaked” (2010, 4). They further suggest that the work to separate WS from religion is “equivalent to surgically dividing conjoined twins” (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2010, 4).

Ultimately the workplace spirituality literature can be summarized into the employee’s search for meaningful work, a workplace community, and transcendence of self-interest. (Karakas 2010; Pawar 2009).

### **DEFINITIONS FOR SPIRITUALITY AND WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY (WS)**

There are a range of definitions for workplace spirituality (WS). Karakas (2010) stated that there are more than 70 definitions of WS. What makes it more difficult is that there are no standard definitions for the root word, spirituality. Definitions of spirituality include concepts such as inner consciousness; enlightenment; “a specific form of work feeling that energizes action;” and a worldview with a path (Karakas 2010, 91). Karakas distinguishes spirituality from religion by characterizing it as a “personal, inclusive, non-denominational, universal human feeling; rather than an adherence to the beliefs, rituals, or practices of a specific organized religious institution or tradition” (Karakas 2010, 91).

Ultimately, spirituality can be referred to as the deepest values and meanings by which a person lives. Spirituality often is characterized by a need to feel connected to other people, the environment, and to some higher reality. Workplace leadership would *not* address the connectedness an individual worker may or may not have to a higher reality, but certainly it would address the employee’s need to connect to a meaningful organizational goal, to the environment, and to others in the workplace (Pawar 2009; Duchon and Plowman 2005). An employee spends a majority of his or her waking hours at work; as a result, this desire to feel connected to others, and to the environment, will pervade the workplace. Leaders must articulate how their organization’s work is beyond economic purposes and serves a larger social purpose. This articulation of transcendence will help the employee know how he or she is instrumental in the organization and how his or her work supports that social purpose (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2010).

Daniel (2010) pulled together the following definitions Workplace Spirituality (WS):

- The recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community (Ashmos and Duchon 2000, 137).
- A framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees’ experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003, 91).

- Spirituality in the workplace is an experience of interconnectedness and trust among those involved in the work process, engendered by individual goodwill; leading to the collective creating of a motivational organizational culture, epitomized by reciprocity and solidarity and resulting in an enhanced overall performance, which is ultimately translated in lasting organizational excellence (Marques 2005, 285).

Grzeda and Assogbavi (2011, 239) offer the following working definition for spirituality in management: It “consists of those management behaviors driven entirely by spiritual values, teachings, or beliefs, regardless of their source, creating connections between behavior and personal spiritual meanings which are cognitively acknowledged and affectively valued by the manager.”

Marques, Allevato and Holt (2008, 85) developed a working definition that states, “spirituality in the workplace is an experience of interconnectedness among those involved in the work process, initiated by authenticity, reciprocity, and personal goodwill engendered by a deep sense of meaning that inherent in the organization’s work; and resulting in greater motivation and organizational excellence.”

Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2010, 5) suggest that the lack of consensus around a conceptual definition for workplace spirituality hampers scientific study. Leigh (1997, 27) further suggests that “no one definition can encompass this entire phenomenon” but it can be said that there is an emphasis by corporate leaders to develop values-based businesses and to “recognize the need to help create meaning and purpose for their employees, and to link an organization more closely with its workforce.”

### **SYNONYMS FOR CONNECTIVITY AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE**

As an organizational behavior professor, could you walk into your classroom and ask your graduate students if they value: fairness in organizations (procedural justice), the ability of their leaders to inspire employee loyalty, the influence to get employees to collectively work toward the higher order goals of the organization (transformational leadership), to create an organization that cares about the employee’s well-being and contributions (organizational support), and sustains employee actions that benefit others without seeking a direct reward (organizational citizenship behaviors)? We suggest that those graduate students would agree whole-heartedly. Yet, would you be as successful to gain these graduate students’ agreement if you asked them if they support workplace spirituality? Research shows that people are mixed on how they view the concept of spirituality and its relationship to formal religion. Mitroff and Denton (1999) found that 60% of their subjects viewed spirituality positively, while the remainder held negative views of spirituality as religion. Leigh (1997) found after interviewing CEOs that they prefer *not* to use the “S” word, referring to spiritual or spirituality.

Pawar (2009) found that the four OB concepts of procedural justice, transformational leadership, organizational support, and organizational citizenship behaviors, are foundational to workplace spirituality. Relevant is the insight that leaders “do *not* explicitly use the term spirituality or workplace spirituality. Rather, they include a different set of explanations for employee transcendence of immediate, narrow, or economic self interests” (Pawar 2009, 254). Pawar

further suggests that synonyms for workplace spirituality (WS) include: employee transformation, social exchange, reciprocity and more (Pawar 2009, 254).

In summary, theorists and practitioners have created new terms that describe the support of the modern workplace. Concepts such as team building, social responsibility, diversity, participative management, servant leadership, job enrichment, theory Y, workplace integrity and of course, business ethics, can be weaved together to describe our professional and human need to transcend self-interest, feel part of something larger, and to connect to other human beings, even within the workplace (Pawar 2009, Sheep 2006). The term spirituality mixed into the workplace vernacular may find sufficient resistance to keep it solely within the pages of academic journals.

### **IS THERE VALUE FOR SPIRITUALITY WITHIN THE WORKPLACE?**

It is not our intent to tie religion to workplace spirituality as we do not expect religion to enter the work environment. The U.S. founders had the insight that religion was personal and our individual rights were worthy of protection. No collective religious beliefs should influence the capitalistic nature of a country that allows each person to benefit from the sweat of his or her own brow. That being said, we *do* wish to discuss the lessons which the spiritual philosophies and religions can offer to management theorists and practitioners. Also, there are other management philosophies that address these same issues of connectivity yet do not use the word spirituality. Business ethics, social responsibility, organizational culture and climate, transformational leadership, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational justice (Pawar 2009), valuing diversity, sustainability, connectedness, and conscientiousness, are all terms that have found a home in the workplace. No fear is attached to using these words and phrases at work; they all represent valued enhancements to organizational life.

Sheep (2006) cited Mitroff and Denton's *Spiritual Audit of Corporate America* (1999) when suggesting that there is evidence that leaders who consider their organizations to be spiritual, also see their businesses as more ethical. Garcia-Zamor (2003) suggested that "bringing spirituality into the workplace could create a different organizational culture in which the employee would be more satisfied and would have an improved performance" (Daniel 2010, 445). Although some scholars suggest that spirituality should be an end in itself and not be used to improve profits, there is a trend toward recognizing WS as tool to engage employees and improve performance, ultimately impacting organizational results (Karakas 2010, 92).

Karakas (2010) reviewed close to 140 workplace spirituality (WS) articles, specifically seeking insights on whether WS supports performance results at work. The findings are well summarized suggesting that WS enhances the employee's quality of life and well-being, helps the employee find meaning and purpose at work, and offers the employee a feeling of being connected to a community. The culture of the organization has a primary influence on the employee's perception of community, connectedness, and spirituality. Reder's (1982) conclusions were cited as "unequivocally" suggesting that "spiritually-based organizational cultures are the most productive and that by maximizing productivity they confer organizational dominance in the marketplace" (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2010, 6). Further it has been shown that cultural factors related to workplace spirituality override the economic-political influences on the employees' productivity (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2010).

Giocalone and Jurkiewicz (2010, 20) suggest that scientific research within the discipline of WS will bring improvements to workplace life, as long as they are “unfettered by legal and religious phobias.” They identified the potential benefits that may emerge from successful collaboration and controlled study of WS and its impact on organizations. These potential areas of benefit include: Recruitment (how do we recruit candidates who desire a spiritual work environment), ethics (increased ethical decision making), creativity and innovation (are spiritual workers more creative?), public relations (repercussions for those accepting or rejecting spirituality), leadership (is job satisfaction influenced by spirituality), work-family issues (what is the relationship to work-life balance and spiritually at work?), and motivational/reward systems (are spiritual workers motivated by different factors than non-spiritual employees?).

## **LESSONS FROM SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHIES AND RELIGIONS**

We have stressed the controversy around the linkage of religion to spirituality within the workplace. There is no doubt that practitioners should not use religious rituals within their business practices, but the lessons that can be gained from these rich and deep spiritual philosophies can be translated into practices that business leaders can use to draw together the spiritual beings at work.

### **Sacred Pipe = Management Consensus**

The Lakota’s Sacred Pipe is the instrument used to ensure that all who meet come in peace. The Lakota’s are a native tribe in the US, members of the Sioux tribe; their strength severely diminished since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This proud tribe brings rich tradition; we can learn from its rituals. When a group of men, including the medicine man, would meet to make tribal decisions, especially the development of their treaties with the US government, the Sacred Pipe was central to the decision making and consensus-gaining process. The smoke from the Sacred Pipe travels upward to the six ancestral grandfathers; it represents the respect toward the decisions that had been made in the past (Neihardt 2008, 4). Neihardt cites Walker’s book, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, discussing how smoking the pipe brings peace among smokers and helps them remember the decisions made by their ancestors. At the beginning of a meeting, the members would pass the Sacred Pipe, allowing each man to reflect on the decision that was to be made that evening. (Neihardt 2008).

Each tribe had its own Sacred Pipe. The host of the meeting would present the pipe to those attending the meeting. The pipe’s decorations represent the establishment of the tribe. When you see the pipe, you understand which tribe’s leader is hosting the meeting (Neihardt 2008, 3). Smoking the pipe also represents to each man that he has the responsibility to be sincere, honest, and devoted to bring forward the best decision for the common good. Though the men would debate and perhaps argue as the decisions were being developed and made, once consensus was gained, all members smoked the Sacred Pipe to seal the decision. Most important, the pipe represents the solidarity among those who contributed to the decision. As everyone leaves the meeting, all are in common agreement that the best decision had been made (Neihardt 2008, 5).

In parallel, the Sacred Pipe still exists today in real-world business decision making. No, there is no smoking at the meetings, but there are minutes gathered which allow those in attendance to reflect on prior decisions. Also, attendance is taken so that the identity of each member at the meetings is recorded and made public for all to see. Most important, managers who fight it out during the meeting may find a social tradition at the end of the meeting to celebrate the consensus gained among all parties. Regardless of where the individuals stand during the debate, everyone walks out of the meeting supporting the group decision. Cocktails, dinner, cigars on a fancy balcony, may all be part of corporate celebrations that are reflective of the spirituality among the decision makers to work toward the common good.

### **Spiritual Reflection = Managerial Empowerment**

Moberg and Calkins (2001) used the writings of St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Society of Jesus, to draw out the essential ingredients that can be translated into a process of managerial reflection that may lead to better decision-making and true empowerment. St. Ignatius' process of reflection is over 500 years old. These Spiritual Exercises were developed for Christian believers; the structure of these exercises used "imagination, role-modeling, and the integration of reason with the emotions" as a means to enhance the spiritual reflection of these Christian disciples (Moberg and Calkins 2001, 257).

Moberg and Calkins bring this process forward to us today as a four-phase process that leaders can use in their daily routines. The process engages the manager's emotions and imagination. It is a strong model for reflection that begins with the individual's experiences and moves toward reflection, conceptualization, and then experimentation. Moberg and Calkins (2001) cite the testimony of Bell and Howell CEO, Charles Percy. He would reflect for 45 minutes each night before bed. This regular evening ritual is similar to the Hindu form of meditation. Percy's evening reflections were modeled after the exercises inspired by St. Ignatius' writings. His meditative reflections allowed him to consider specific questions or simply focus on conflicts, expectations, attitudes, and whatever else may have been on his mind.

The essential part of the process is that it allows the manager or the employee to draw on his or her real-world experiences; these experiences may otherwise be lost in the hurried life-style of today's over-worked leaders.

The benefit of this reflective process is two-fold. These reflective practices can be used by leaders, but they can also be taught to employees. As employees are given these advanced tools, they will be more apt to offer solutions to workplace problems as they draw upon their experiences within the realm of quiet reflection. Essential is that the reflective process remain absolutely voluntary (Moberg and Calkins 2001). Once again, a process that has a spiritual undertone must be presented to the employees cleansed of any religious reference.

In conclusion, Moberg and Calkins (2001) propose that St-Ignatius Loyola's approach touches many of the themes which are central to contemporary business ethics (virtue, role modeling, emotional engagement, interpersonal relationships). Done well, the Spiritual Exercises offer clear-headedness to both leaders and their employees.

## **Eastern Spiritual Philosophies = Modern Management Vision Statements**

Corner (2009) extends the theory on the relationship between workplace spirituality and business ethics by integrating lessons from ancient Eastern spiritual traditions, such as yoga. The yogic self control (“Yamas” in Sanskrit) is comprised of five practices for harmonizing and deepening social connections in the Workplace within any community.

Most of the Eastern cultures are aware of yoga (in Sanskrit it means to join). Yogic practices include Asanas (static posture), breathing practices (pranayama), and meditation (Sivananda 2007). These Yogic practices are relatively new to the West, when compared to the ancient philosophies of Yama. The practice of yoga achieves a permanent state of peace, joy, and selfless dedication to humanity (Satchidananda 2004).

The five practices of Yama come from an uncertain period over 3000 years old (Vishnu-Devananda. 1981). They are designed to harmonize a person’s social interactions. Harmonized relationships are needed because any discordance disturbs the mind (Corner 2009). Great examples of those who practiced the Yamas is Mahatma Gandhi, who practiced non-violence, “Ahimsa.” Charles Darwin demonstrated the use of truthfulness and honesty “Asteya,” when reflecting authorship of his book, “Origin of The Species” in 1856.

Driscoll and McKee (2007) also bring forward the connections between spirituality in the workplace, ethical organizational culture, and authentic transformational leadership. They provide examples of spiritual storytelling by leaders that give employees the capacity to understand the goals and objectives of the enterprise. A double win-win situation occurs: the leader becomes more attainable and may feel more efficient in his or her work. Simultaneously the work is accomplished by a conscious employee who’s more aware of the businesses vision and values.

These spiritual philosophies can be foundational for the development of organizational mission and vision statements. Values-based organizations that build their processes on such spiritually healthy philosophies will enjoy longevity that will be felt for decades as the organization thrives in the changing environments which are prevalent in Capitalistic cultures.

### **Jainism ≠ Nazism**

The philosophy of Jainism has similarity to Buddhism, Hinduism and the Tibetan philosophy. The religion prescribes a path of total non-violence towards all living things. For example, a root vegetable is not harvested, because it would be considered a practice of killing, which is against the philosophy of Jainism. We recognize that this practice may only exist with individuals who are fundamentalists, but demonstrates the full range of this non-violent philosophy. The existence of Jainism goes back over 2500 years. It’s the smallest religion but among those considered most important (Foot 1999).

The Religious symbol of Jainism is the Svastika. Its definition is *the state of goodness*. The Svastika represents the “Kosmos;” the four worlds: men, gods, fauna, and the world of devils. The moral code of that religion possessed five vows (non-violence, sincerity, honesty, chastity,

and non-attachment of material). The form was adopted by Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich as its political party insignia in 1920. After World War II, this emblem was almost completely eliminated in the West due to its connection to the evil outcomes of the Nazi's. This is in complete opposition with the pure philosophy of Jainism. (Changing Times 2005).

The lesson is that a leader may be able to use the values of a spiritual philosophy to manipulate followers. This is warning that aligns with the concerns of some WS authors on the use of spirituality in the workplace.

### **Extreme Example of Religion at Work = Warning To Practitioners**

Proulx's (2006) work focused on the presence of religion in the workplace. Though rare in Quebec, she did find more instances in the USA, where religious artifacts and practices were explicitly present in the workplace. She articulated in detail the story of one Canadian company, Tomasso Corp. This company produces frozen Italian meals and is owned by Mr. Jean-Robert Ouimet, who is a conservative Catholic. Proulx documented his model for leadership, which he had developed while earning his doctorate. Mr. Jean-Robert Ouimet was so confident in his business philosophy, that he said, "I challenge anyone to be successful in business without a spiritual presence." He further stated, "Without God, we don't go far" (Proulx 2006). He had no constraint in openly promoting his own values (Driscoll and McKee 2007). Proulx's (2006) work revealed less spirituality and more explicit religious presence within Ouimet's organization. Mr. Ouimet had developed his philosophy in the form of a Management Guide, which he titled, "Gold Book." The "Gold Book" (Le Livre Doré) was a direct summary of his doctoral thesis, which was titled, "Management Tools for Maintaining Happiness and Productivity." Proulx found religious artifacts in the form of religious posters, a dedicated room where employees could pray, the presence of prayer before board meetings, and the ability for employees to volunteer at charity organizations during working hours. Proulx commented that Mr. Ouimet even required a moment of silence before his meetings with her.

Mr. Jean-Robert Ouimet was very clear in his hiring practices. He was not shy in describing his hiring philosophy, which is, "To work for me, you must believe; otherwise you won't be happy working in my business." Before hiring a new employee, he would meet with both the employee candidate and his or her partner in a social setting. This provided Mr. Ouimet an opportunity to fully evaluate the spiritual life-style of the candidate. After hearing of this practice, Proulx asked Mr. Ouimet what may happen if the employee candidate arrived at the lunch meeting with his same-sex partner. Mr. Ouimet did not directly answer; there was complete silence. Ultimately his response to Proulx was "no homosexual has applied to my business." He did acknowledge that it may happen one day. He finished by saying, "God loves everyone" (Proulx 2006).

Proulx did not find any conflict within the Tomasso Corp., but it is most likely due to the owner's hiring practices that resulted in a like-minded work group of practicing Catholics. Everyone is on the same page. As of the writing of this paper, we are not aware of any filed discrimination suits. Oddly, the conflict arose from the owner's son, Mr. Robert Ouimet, Jr. Proulx suggested that observers of Tomasso Corp. were perplexed by the owner's explicit display of religiosity. While Ouimet Jr. was working for the father's parent company, he had

confided to a journalist that he felt that religion has no place in a commercial business. That conflict between the father and son nearly landed them in court.

On the opposite end of the spectrum Proulx (2006) offers the example of Cascades Corporation, which considers spirituality less important. For example, if an employee candidate includes on the application any reference to spirituality as a component of their personal life-style, there is a good chance that this person may not get an interview. The company-position is that an employee's spiritual activities should be private. The company prefers focusing on employee well-being and treating each with dignity and respect.

Proulx (2006) concluded by saying that there is a lack of consensus when discussing the meaning of Workplace Spirituality. WS means different things to different people and Proulx's extreme examples demonstrate this lack of agreement. The lesson to practitioners is to strike the balance where spirituality is inclusive, secular, non-threatening, and most important, non-discriminating.

### **ARE FUTURE LEADERS AND MANAGERS LEARNING ABOUT THE VALUE OF WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY?**

Managers gain their knowledge and skills from a variety of sources, some directly from an industry providing a lifetime of hands-on experience, others learn business skills from working in their families' businesses, others start businesses as entrepreneurs and learn as they grow, and many come from business schools. Individuals who intentionally plan a career in business will often enter a graduate business program leading to the Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree. The International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE) and The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) are the specialized accrediting bodies for institutions that offer business education programs. Although business education includes the disciplines of Management, Marketing, Accounting, Finance and Managing Information Systems, this article focuses on the discipline of management, which is a dominant discipline within graduate level business education (Mackenzie and Smith 2009). An appropriate management curriculum, as defined by the IACBE includes 1) management principles, 2) organizational behavior, 3) human resource management, and 4) operations management. The IACBE standards are established to "ensure that students understand and are prepared to deal effectively with critical issues in a changing global business environment" (IACBE Accreditation Manual 2006, 73).

The Workplace Spirituality literature is nestled within the discipline of Organizational Behavior (Pawar 2009), which is classified as a primary knowledge area for management education (IACBE Accreditation Manual 2006). It may therefore be assumed that workplace spirituality is part of the business curriculum. We suggest that is an assumption that cannot be made. We further suggest that it is unclear as to whether WS is explicitly discussed in business school. Perhaps the WS concepts are being taught, but without using the "S" word. Thompson (2000) asks whether you can train people to be spiritual. He suggests that "trainers who help people develop supervisory skills, teach them how to deal with difficult colleagues, or coach them on their career paths are providing training in spirituality – just under different names" (Thompson 2000, 18). His research had found that High Schools are starting to provide spiritual training

under the Character Education Movement, which gained impetus after the shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado (Thompson 2000).

Grzeda and Assogbavi (2011) suggest that business education still focuses heavily on teaching future leaders how to pursue profitability and exploiting every opportunity for continuous growth. They draw from the healing disciplines, and more specifically Tikkun olam, to recommend a conceptual approach for management education. Briefly, Tikkun olam, translated “repair of the world,” encourages social action directed at the community or society with the intent of healing social ills. Grzeda and Assogbavi (2011, 243) suggest that management education needs to be authentically transformed by “essentially substituting an orientation toward *repair of the world* to replace profitability as the ultimate business goal.”

Before we move forward with a transformation of management education, we recommend that we look at what *is* being taught in today’s graduate programs. We recognize that general ethics and philosophy is traditionally taught within the general education curriculum of undergraduate programs. Business ethics is most likely integrated into the business and management curriculum. Yet, we suspect that spirituality is limited to the academic disciplines of theology and philosophy. Since management is the science of oversight, most often of labor, which translates to mean people, we suggest that managers should actively learn to engage and manage the spiritual person. Our proposal for research will allow us to better understand whether our future leaders are receiving the knowledge and skills they will need to fully engage their employees.

## **A PROPOSAL FOR RESEARCH**

The purpose of this research proposal is to gain a better understanding of what WS concepts are being taught to graduate students within business education programs. The study is designed to be exploratory in nature (Morse and Richards 2002, 27-28) and will use descriptive statistics to describe the data collected, and qualitative methods to draw meaning from the data and to extract tentative conclusions and recommendations (Kidder 1981, 103). Any human subject research will include approval by the Dowling College IRB.

The study will be conducted in three stages. Stage *one* will include a review of the business curriculum for a random sample of graduate business programs. Stage *two* will include a questionnaire to graduate professors that will probe and explore the results from the stage one syllabus review. Stage *three* will include a questionnaire to current graduate students to explore whether they have observed any reference to spirituality within their current or previous workplaces. These students will be provided definitions of WS and asked whether they have seen any such behaviors demonstrated within their current or previous work environments.

### **Stage One Sample**

The population and sampling frame for Stage One is the colleges included in the most recent publication of the *US World Report on Best Colleges*. The non-probability based, purposive sample drawn from this sampling frame will be randomly selected. Ten colleges with graduate business programs will be drawn from the group of *most* selective schools. Ten colleges with

graduate business programs will be drawn from the group of *more* selective schools. Ten colleges will be drawn from the group of *selective* schools. The sample size will be a total of thirty graduate business programs in the United States.

### **Stage One Program Review**

The program website for the graduate MBA program will be used to gather stage one data. The following data elements will be collected:

- Is there any required course in the curriculum which includes the term spirituality in its title?
- Is there any elective course in the curriculum which includes the term spirituality in its title?
- Review the course description for any leadership courses and organizational behavior courses to determine if the term spirituality is included in the description.
- Capture the name and contact information for the professors teaching Leadership and Organizational Behavior courses within the program.

### **Stage One Syllabus Review**

Search for the syllabus for the Organizational Behavior course offered within the graduate program. Review those syllabi for the following:

- Any evidence that Workplace Spirituality is being covered within the course.
- Any evidence that Workplace Spirituality – *like* concepts are being covered within this course. This will include concepts such as: ethics, consciousness, transformational leadership, organizational citizenship behaviors, servant leadership, etc.

### **Stage One Analysis**

Descriptive statistics will be captured and reported.

### **Stage Two Sample and Questionnaire**

One hundred percent of the professors teaching either leadership or organizational behavior will be contacted to explore and probe the results gathered from stage one. These professors will be asked to comment on the workplace spirituality concepts that are discussed in their classes. Open-ended questions will be used to gather rich data.

### **Stage Two Analysis**

Content analysis will be used to reduce the data from the responding graduate professors and to draw tentative conclusions.

### **Stage Three Sample and Questionnaire**

A sample of convenience of 50 current graduate MBA students will be provided descriptions of workplace spirituality definitions. The students will be asked to describe any observed behaviors or references they have experienced at their current job or any previous job.

## Stage Two Analysis

Content analysis will be used to reduce the data from the responding graduate students and to draw tentative conclusions.

### OPEN DISCUSSION FOR MANAGEMENT THEORISTS AND PRACTITIONERS

The literature suggests that there is a lot of controversy within the emerging field of Workplace Spirituality. Many scholars' basic aim is to "make the area of spirituality at work research more legitimate and mainstream to organizational studies" (Karakas 2010, 92). The purpose of our paper is to invite open discussion on the topic of spirituality in the workplace. To spur discussion, we have presented knowledge drawn from the literature as well as lessons that have emerged from the spiritual philosophies. We have also proposed a research process that will explore academic business programs to determine whether workplace spirituality has entered into the academic preparation of future managers. Perhaps we can now apply the once considered *New Age* philosophies to current workplace strategies. On the other hand, perhaps it more effective to continue to train and use the concepts of workplace spirituality under their covert labels and avoid the controversy in using the "S" word.

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