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The need to address religious diversity at work: an all-inclusive model of spirituality at work

Ivonne Valero Cázares
University of South Florida

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" The Need to Address Religious Diversity at Work:
an all-inclusive model of spirituality at work."

by

Ivonne Valero Cázares

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of:
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Department of Religious Studies
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Major professor: Tori Lockler, Ph. D.
Jay Michaels, Ph.D
Gil Ben-Herut, Ph. D.

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Dedication

For Ana and Pepe, who helped me to discover my primary purpose in this life,

For Imelda Torres-Laborde, my mentor, who has also shown me what true friendship and sisterhood are.

For Lama Tony Karam and all the excellent spiritual teachers who help me transform my mind.

This work could not be possible without your loving kindness and support.

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the importance of embracing religion and spirituality in the workplace as an aspect of workplace diversity. This document aims to help us understand the definition of spirituality in the workplace and its constituents.

We conducted a literature review from predominant scholars about the salience of spirituality and religion in the workplace and its relevance to building meaning, connectedness, and a sense of belonging. We will also review Maslow's theory of Human Needs, his research on human peak experiences, and its correlation to self-actualization and transcendence.

We will present a new model of Spirituality and Religion at the workplace (SRW) and explain how each one of its dimensions is linked to the different dimensions of the human being: the body, the self, his social identity, and what is called the Higher Mind. Likewise, this model provides a holistic view of the different constituents of spirituality at the workplace and helps us understand how these interact systemically to satisfy a range of human needs, from the most basic needs to the highest order needs

The conclusions of this literature review is very significant because it brings an interdisciplinary perspective, which can become the basis for scholars, consultants, and Human Resources Managers to develop novel approaches for the inclusion of spirituality and religion at the workplace that improves employee engagement, commitment, alignment to the organization, self-actualization, mental health, and well-being.

Last, we mention the importance of leadership in encouraging spirituality in the workplace and call for more research about the positive results of implementing Spiritual Leadership in organizations.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Spirituality and religion in the workplace (SRW) has drawn substantial attention, and yet little focus has been given to the examination of the relationship between SRW and diversity. (McMurray & Simmers, 2019, p. 70). After the 2020-2021 Covid19 pandemic, we are facing an unprecedented situation in terms of employment where high talent people face underlying discrimination because of their skin color, because they are not neurotypical, because they come from other countries, because their culture is different than the American culture, or simply because they see things differently than the status quo. In many cases, talented people are cast out from their working groups because lack of adequately trained managers, who are limited by their bias. This bias can extend to other factors previously listed, including religion. Understanding SRW is of interest as there is an increased overlap between work and non-work life, and with this intersection, many pursue opportunities for meaningful experiences in the workplace (Pawar, 2016).

During the last 20 years, we have seen a growing interest in the subject of spirituality and religion at the workplace (SRW) from the business and psychology fields. However, there is still a need for quality interdisciplinary research. It is easy to find abundant research published in a variety of solid journals that center on the topic of religion in the workplace. However, there is a need for quality research in the literature that integrates the research findings into one model that explains how spirituality and religion mediate the relationship between individual inner-life, the social need to connect with others in a group, and the way that people make sense of the two to find life meaning and purpose in the workplace.

Researchers acknowledge the need for integrating the scholarship. Per Tackney et al. (2017):

The Management, Spirituality, and Religion (MSR) Interest Group of the Academy of Management is a confluence point of scholars in this emerging field. Despite 15 years of functioning as an interest group, our domain of inquiry is relatively young, and there are limited theoretical boundaries to support, shape, and assist our efforts. This metaphorical blank canvas is both empowering and that so many are open for exploration, and yet also limiting. Without the scaffolding of established theory and guardrails of conceptual maps, we must be cautious to ensure quality and rigor in our scholarship (p.245).

Accordingly, there is support for the need to better develop an integrative model of SRW better. In this paper, I will review the definitions of SRW from Ashmon, Duchon, and Petchsawang and conduct a literature review from other prominent authors in the subject to learn about the scholarly progression and findings in this subject. However, I will start by reviewing Maslow's motivation theory and his perspective on religions, values, and self-transcendence as Maslow's contributions to humanistic psychology are key to helping us understand the dynamics of SRW at the workplace and its potential benefits. Building upon this foundation, I will also review the fundamentals of psychology's Action Identification Theory and use this concept to better understand how Maslow's theories are linked to the meaning people that take from their work.

The intent of this work is to engage psychologists, organizational behavior experts, and human resources executives to learn from their experiences and to join efforts to develop better diversity strategies at the workplace that embrace religion and spirituality. Considering that people spend at least half of their awake time at work, academics and consultants should work together to help business and institutional leaders develop novel talent management strategies to educate their organization members on how to understand and embrace varied religious perspectives at the workplace. I propose that an SRW model provides a foundation for

understanding the different dimensions that drive behavior in organizations and can help people learn to live a more compassionate and harmonious life at the workplace that will benefit organizations by increasing engagement from their employees. By understanding the different dimensions of our spirituality, we will learn how to successfully mediate the relationship between the inner life and the social dimension of individuals.

Before examining the key ideas about Maslow's theory, Action Identification theory, and these theories' connection to religion, spirituality, and the workplace, it is essential to distinguish between being "religious" and "spiritual." Religion is generally characterized as a set of outward, formal, and structured practices and beliefs (Héliot et al., 2020, p. 165), while spirituality is concerned with finding and expressing meaning and purpose and living in relation to others and something bigger than oneself. (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

Appreciating the subtle difference between religion and spirituality will help us understand the scholarship and my proposal of why a model of spirituality at the workplace can help bridge division among different religious practitioners, agnostics, and atheists. Every day more people are abandoning organized religion, proclaiming themselves as agnostic or atheist (Maslow, 1964), but this does not mean that they do not embrace spirituality in their lives. This is exactly the brink point, and the perfect time in history when we can transition to a more inclusive (global) working community that does not divide us based on religious beliefs, race, or gender but rather is respectful and embraces different ways of thinking based on principles such as empathy, compassion, patience, generosity, ethical conduct, perseverance, and wisdom (Maslow, 1971, p. 216). Embracing SRW is necessary for considering how religion and spirituality are essential parts of most societies.

According to Durkheim, religion and spirituality play a key function in society, including the workplace (Baykal, 2021). According to Durkheim, "collective beliefs are important in the path through which society becomes aware of itself since they contribute to the expression of the

homogeneous physical movements constituting the ritual" (Baykal, p. 32). Durkheim's sociology model emphasizes the importance of collective values and ideals, which bring people together as a group and give meaning to the lives of individuals and their activities in society. In the same way, religion and spirituality have the same social function in the workplace community. Religion and spirituality can help people recognize similarities in their beliefs and form a better collective identity. Therefore, a model of religion and spirituality at the workplace can bridge the gap between employees' different religious practices to encourage shared identity. Developing shared identities and values must be based on a carefully crafted intentional effort to design diversity strategies that address the particular situations in an organization (Crescione & Baumister, 2013).

Once we present a new model of Spirituality and Religion at the workplace, the logical question that will surface is "But, what do I do with it? How can this help me build a more inclusive organization and satisfied employees?". One of the first considerations that Human Resources (HR) leaders must take while developing a company culture that embraces diversity is the need for a Moral Code that is respectful of all different types of spirituality (Crescioni & Baumister 2013), and this will only be possible when the organization enunciates values that are inclusive of employees religion and spirituality.

There is support in the scholarship for the idea that recognizing and cultivating an appreciation of religion and spirituality in the workplace can be beneficial. For example, in their 14-year literature review from 2016, Krishnakumar and Neck (2016) claim that the encouragement of spirituality in the workplace can lead to benefits such as increased creativity, honesty and trust, personal fulfillment, and commitment to the organization, which ultimately lead to better performance. Studies have also demonstrated that enabling employees to be authentic at the workplace increases well-being and happiness, strengthens relationships, leads to higher job

satisfaction, and increases productivity. (Héliot et al., 2020). Allowing religion and spirituality to be a part of the workplace can enhance this authenticity.

According to Ashmos & Duchon (2000), spirituality at the workplace is "the recognition of an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community" (p. 135). In their publication, the authors remark on the importance of the individual inner-life in the workplace community context. Later, in 2012, Dennis Duchon published another work with Petchsawang to analyze the relationship between meditation practice, spirituality at the workplace, and performance. From this work, they rephrased the definition of spirituality at the workplace as "having compassion toward others, experiencing a mindful inner consciousness in the pursuit of meaningful work that enables transcendence" (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2012, p.191). The evolution of this second definition is significant because it includes a larger expression of the spiritual and religious dimensions of the people in the workplace. It now includes terms as "compassion towards others", "mindful inner-consciousness," and "meaningful work that enables transcendence". These terms lead us to a better understanding of the constituents of a successful model of spirituality at the workplace.

I establish the relevance of religion and spirituality in the workplace in Sections Three and Four, I examine Maslow's hierarchy of needs and his perspective on religion, values, and self-actualization in Section Five. Using this framework, we can then identify how meaningful work and membership are essential in order to satisfy higher-order psychological needs.

Membership is achieved through the workplace community. Meaningful work can be accomplished by work that is aligned with important values, like those linked to religion and spirituality. According to Maslow, a spiritual practice, meaningful work, and a sense of belonging are important for self-actualization.

Chapter 2: Definitions

In order to understand the contents of this document, it is preferable to be familiar with these definitions:

- 1) Religion: Organization generally characterized as an outward, formal set of standard practices and beliefs (Mohr, 2006). People define religion as a more formalized belief and practice system shared by others who join together in an ongoing, structured way (Pew Foundation, 2010).
- 2) Spirituality: According to Guillory (2000, p. 33) is, our "inner consciousness" and what is spiritual comes from within beyond our programmed beliefs and values. It is beyond the structures and rules of religion. Mitroff and Denton (1999) define spirituality as the "basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others, and the entire universe" (p.89). According to Ashmos& Duchon (2000),"the spiritual dimension of human beings is concerned with finding and expressing meaning and purpose, and living in relation to others and something bigger than oneself" (p.135), "The recognition of an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community." (Ashmon & Duchon, 2000 p. 137). "Having compassion toward others, experiencing a mindful inner consciousness in the pursuit of meaningful work that enables transcendence" (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2012), p.191).
- 3) Inner life: "is about coming to understand one's own divine power, and how to use that divine power to live a more satisfying and more full outer life" (Ashmon & Duchon, 2020, p. 136). Refers to the way we feel and perceive the universe from within and the interpretation we give to phenomena occurring outside of us. This interpretation is

interdependent with our life experiences, education, and beliefs system and directly impacts the way we face and manage situations.

- 4) Purpose: Central motivating aims of one's life; the reasons why we get up in the morning. What gives our life meaning, a sense of self-actualization when we make an effort to achieve. Transcendent goals in life. (see Crescione and Baumister, 2013).
- 5) Meaningful work: Activities that move us closer to our life purpose. Work that makes us feel that we contribute to a larger life purpose and positively strengthen our self-concept. (see Crescione and Baumister, 2013).
- 6) Workplace community: "The relationships that employees develop among one another, at the workplace, as a result of socialization" (Baykal 2021, p. 27).
- 7) Employee engagement involves physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects of the work experience and relates to the meaning people find in their work. An engaged employee exerts significant effort toward their work, but the effort reflects enjoyment, not compulsion (Roof, 2013).
- 8) Cognition: Refers to the way we learn, explore, discover and create a better understanding of the world (Maslow, 1971). It refers to how we apprehend the objects and events outside of us.
- 9) Self-actualization: Refers to the need to pursue and fulfill one's unique potential. (Maslow, 1943)
- 10) Transcendence: Refers to the very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating, as ends rather than means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature, and the cosmos (Maslow, 1971).

11) Well-being: the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy. (OED Online, Oxford University Press).

Chapter 3: Religion as an aspect of workplace diversity

Considering the fact that the population of the U.S.A. is very diverse in terms of national origin, race, sex, and religion, it is undeniable that we need to find a way to help people connect on "common ground" instead of focusing on our differences. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are topics that have become even more relevant during the last couple of years, with renewed focus and emphasis on how to better address these in large organizations better.

However, most of the diversity management initiatives in corporate America today are focused on gender and race only. The need for models to successfully embrace religious diversity at the workplace has been overlooked, even though 76.5% of the U.S.A. reports some religious affiliation (Pew Research, 2021), and it is included as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, along with race, sex, and national origin. Title VII prohibits employers of 15 people or more from discrimination against employees or applicants in hiring, firing, and other terms and conditions of employment because of their religious beliefs or practices (Grim, 2020). Thus, there is a legal concern about why SRW is an important topic, especially considering how religious and spiritual beliefs are central to many peoples' worldviews.

For millions of people, religious beliefs are fundamental and directly related to employee values and personal identity. Therefore, understanding and addressing religious diversity at the workplace is key to fostering respectful relationships at the workplace and developing a sense of community within organizations.

With the increased amount of time being spent in the workplace, employees have an increased desire to express parts of themselves that are more most important. Future research should examine the factors that affect the extent to which employees are willing

to express their feelings of displeasure when they perceive that their religious rights have been violated (Grim, 2009, p. 53).

Religious identity has deep-level implications for diversity management but it has been neglected in Human Resources (HR) practice, making the workplace diversity issue prone to tension and conflict. Tensions between religious and work identities can adversely affect employee well-being and other individual outcomes. Recognizing this is significant considering that many people's identities are strongly tied to their work roles and religious beliefs. As Héliot et al. (2020) explain,

Identity incorporates the interests, values, abilities and norms a person ascribes to the self in the context of a social role, such as the occupation of a professor or a nurse.

Narrowly formulated, the components of identity are cognitive (I am), evaluative (I value), and emotional (I feel about). In a broader sense, identity has both content (e.g. values and beliefs) and associated behaviors. Religious and occupational identities constitute a deep structure comprised of both conscious and unconscious processes that underlie the individuals' broader self-concept (Héliot et al., 2020, p. 154).

Self-concept is constantly reinforced by the social identities of an individual, and vary according to the different roles in life. Individuals need to integrate their various identities in order to experience belonging and distinctiveness at the same time. The inner-life of a person is where all these different identities are reconciled into their worldview. For many people, spirituality and religious beliefs mediate the relationship amongst these identities to make sense of everyday actions, pursuits, and longings. If spiritual and religious beliefs are segregated from the workplace, some people may feel that their identity is devalued and they cannot be their authentic selves at work.

Current practices in corporations tend to focus only on allowance for prayer time and time off for religious observances, but this may not necessarily address how religious and occupational identities interact, and opens the call for quality research in this area. This is because religion and spiritual beliefs are often central to individual identity and part of the genuine selves.

"The notion of the authentic self is a key aspect of diversity at a deeper, more invisible level. It refers to the desire to express one's internal self through actions in the external world. In the workplace, to be authentic, employees must experience congruence between their internal values and external expressions" (Héliot et al. I, 2020, p. 155). As this quote reflects, people are motivated to experience congruence between their inner life, including religion and spirituality, and their external actions. This congruence exists not only in private but also in workplace environments.

Although religious identities can be congruent with work identities, they can create tension and conflict in others. "Internal or intraindividual conflict is a common focus in research on religious identity and refers to conflicts in values, beliefs, norms, and expectations held by a single individual" (Héliot et al. I, 2020, p. 156).

Therefore, a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy that only focuses on race and gender will not be well rounded if it does not include spirituality and religious diversity.

Of course, addressing diversity in the workplace can lead to tensions; for example, the increased emphasis on gender diversity inclusion creates discomfort in some groups and may bring a hostile reaction towards members of other affinity groups. For example, the attitude of some conservative Christians toward sexual minorities may create adverse responses to gay and lesbian co-workers or customers (Héliot et al. I, 2020, p. 157). Human resource practitioners should not neglect this fact, as it will continue to grow in the future unless we find new ways of managing change and modeling global citizenship. We need to help people adapt

to contemporary diversity where we need to collaborate respectfully with people of many different mindsets. If we are truly inclusive, we ought to consider that modeling new behaviors in our workforce needs to come from respect and appreciation for all, where all people can gradually absorb the change.

Academic research in this area is necessary because as we continue to grow in plurality, clashes in organizations will increase. There is a need to provide human resources leaders with the tools to manage the transition to a fully integrated, diverse workforce. To empower the different minorities, we have seen a growing tendency to create affinity groups within large organizations, but, at the same time, it is creating a distance among sub-groups. As a result, management leaders now face a new challenge to bring them all together into only one strong organization. This challenge extends to generational differences.

According to McMurray and Simmers (2019), another critical factor to consider when studying the influence of spirituality and religion in the workplace is generational diversity:

A recent phenomenon in the workplace is the existence of generational diversity with often four generations employed within the same workplace. Generational characteristics shared by employees from the same generational cohort affect their philosophical stance on relationships, work ethic, and behavior, motivators, attitude towards teamwork, communication preferences, perception of organizational hierarchy and their approach to managing change (p. 71).

The question raised by these scholars is "how do different generations view spirituality and religion at the workplace?." Evidence supports that people have different attitudes towards what is considered religion versus spirituality.

As we have mentioned before, spirituality refers to an employee's internal life, which sustains their vision of the universe. According to Ashmos & Duchon (2000)," the spiritual dimension of

human beings is concerned with finding and expressing meaning and purpose and living in relation to others and something bigger than oneself" (p. 135).

Greenfield et al. (2009) conducted a large scale survey of Americas found that spirituality was positively related to psychological well-being, with "spirituality" defined as an individual's sense of connection with the transcendent, integration of self, and feelings of awe, gratitude, compassion, and forgiveness. They contrasted with "religiosity", the individual's endorsement of a religion's doctrines and values, which was unrelated to well-being. We note that both spirituality and religiosity differ from religious identity (Héliot et al., 2020, p. 165).

On the other hand, religion is generally characterized as an outward, formal set of structured practices and beliefs. (Héliot et al., 2020, p. 165). These differences between religion and spirituality may partly be why generational differences in religiosity are evident.

The importance of generational diversity is critical to the understanding of different perspectives of Spirituality and Religion at the workplace. Crocker and Voas (2006) observed a continuous decline of religion throughout the twentieth century. This decline was noticeably generational in nature. They found that members of Generation X (1965-1980) were the most likely to be spiritual but not religious, and Millennials (1980-1999) were consistently less religious than Baby Boomers (1946-1964) (McMurray & Simmers, 2019. p. 73).

The results from the analysis of 282 surveys conducted by Héliot et al. In 2020, reflect that Gen Xers are significantly higher than Millennials in spirituality awareness in life and saw spirituality as global, and the Baby Boomers were higher than the Millennials in spirituality. (McMurray & Simmers, p. 75) One may attribute the higher values in spirituality in older people due to aging and maturity because, with age, people become more conscious of their spiritual dimension and reduce their focus on material goods and worldly concerns. Baby Boomers and Gen X

members reported similar levels of religiosity. Still, all generational cohorts expressed low levels of extrinsic religiosity, indicating that religiosity for social reasons is not important anymore. Overall, the results indicated a general trend where people are turning away from religion. (McMurray and Simmers, 2019, p. 76).

The trend in human beings opting out of religion and practicing their own model of spirituality was also attested by Pew Research, which conducted 35,000 surveys in 50 states in 2021 and reported that 23% of the U.S. population are atheists, agnostic, or report no religious faith. However, this doesn't mean that people are not practicing other forms of spirituality that are secular or inter-religious in nature. The perspectives about "the sacred" can be very different in the 21st century, and this is the key argument that I will use to present my argument that a secular model of spirituality at the workplace can bridge the gap between employees' different religious practices, to encourage shared identity.

Chapter 4: Human needs, religiosity, and the workplace.

To discuss what spirituality is at the workplace, we must first talk about what spirituality is. In 1999, Mitroff & Denton published their "Study of Spirituality in the Workplace" in the Sloan Management Review, which has become one of the pivotal publications in this subject. They presented the results of more than 100 interviews conducted with senior managers and executives to discuss what gives them meaning and purpose in their work. The results revealed a new dimension that still requires more quality academic research.

People interviewed were asked what gives them meaning and purpose at their work. Some of the answers from the interviewees included:

Spirituality is the feeling of this interconnectedness and being in touch with it. Thus, spirituality is giving expression to one's feelings (Mitroff & Denton, 1999, p. 89).

Spirituality is inextricably connected with caring, hope, kindness, love, and optimism. It cannot be proved logically or scientifically that these things exist in the universe as a whole. Spirituality is the basic faith in the existence of these things. Faith is exactly the thing that renders their strict proof unnecessary (Mitroff & Denton, 1999, p. 89).

From the respondents definition of spirituality, they gleaned these key elements of spirituality:

- The ability to realize my full potential as a person
- Being associated with a good organization or an ethical organization.
- Interesting work

- Making money
- Having good colleagues, serving humankind
- Service to future generations
- Service to my immediate community

It is essential to see that the paycheck showed to be only in the 4th place, so "beyond a certain threshold, pay ceases to be the most important, and higher needs prevail. The desire for 'self-actualization,' as Maslow called it, becomes paramount" (Mitroff & Denton, 1999, p. 85).

Starting from this concept of spirituality, we can now move on to the concept of spirituality at work. In 2000, Ashmos & Duchon conducted an exploratory study doing 696 interviews in the Healthcare industry, where they selected three elements from the initial seven identified by Mitroff & Denton, as they considered these to be the most relevant that contribute to organizational performance: inner life, meaningful work, and community. These three elements are significant to vital human needs.

As Maslow identified it, one of the three basic human needs is the need to belong to a larger group or community, where people feel they belong and are appreciated. In the absence of a family or a close group of friends, for many, "the workplace provides the only consistent link to other people and to the human needs for connection and contribution" (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000, p.134)

Recognizing spirituality at work is about recognizing that workers are spiritual beings that need to express themselves as a whole, with authenticity, with congruence to their values, beliefs, and aspirations. But also, workers need to be fully appreciated as whole persons within their workgroup. From this perspective, we must recognize that the workplace has become a source of spiritual growth and connection to others (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000, p. 136).

Considering that people spend at least 50% of their awake time at work, there is a lot of quality research yet to be done to help business and institutional leaders to develop better talent management strategies. Leaders must educate their organization members on embracing different perspectives at the workplace and create more inclusive organizations where people from different backgrounds can collaborate effectively and build constructive working relationships. However, research shows that most large corporations fail to develop a religious diversity initiative or even mention religion or beliefs as part of their diversity initiatives on their public websites (Grim, 2020, p. 230). This oversight neglects an essential part of worker authenticity relevant to the workplace community: religion and spirituality.

Other scholars have identified elements important for workplace success similar to the three Ashmos and Duchon (2000) identified (inner life, meaningful work, and community). For example, in 2003, Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson conducted another study and chose three dimensions that they postulate significantly impact employees' attitudes and behaviors: meaningful work, sense of community, and alignment with the organization. These studies consistently find that meaningfulness, community, and having an inner life aligned with the workplace are important factors for employee success.

The significance of workplace community is evident from other research. The essence of the workplace community "involves a deeper understanding of the connection among people, including support, freedom of expression, and genuine caring" (Milliman et al. 2003, p. 429).

The psychological sense of community (PSOC) has been differentiated from other management constructs, such as team cohesion and social capital. It involves four aspects: (a) membership or feeling of belonging, (b) influence, which entails a sense of making a difference to a group, (c) integration and fulfillment of a member's needs through the group membership; and (d) a shared emotional connection (Milliman et al., 2003, p. 430). A person that feels appreciated in their community is more likely to feel safe and engaged in the group dynamics. Thus,

developing a sense of community at the workplace is important to engage employees in the organization's strategy and goals, "for individuals to feel psychologically safe means feeling free to express elements of themselves without fear of adverse implications" (Héliot et al., 2020. p. 167).

Baykal refers to the workplace community as the relationships that employees develop among one another, at the workplace, as a result of socialization (Baykal 2021, p. 27). In her publication "Understanding Religion as a phenomenon in workplace spirituality: a Durkheimian approach," she mentions that legacy business corporate models rooted in the principle of work specialization no longer satisfy the needs of modern labor, and people feel disengaged from their work and their employers. Hence, people have come to realize the importance of workplace spirituality. According to Fry (2003) spiritual leadership theory, corporations no longer need to choose between profits and human well-being, the workplace spirituality approach provides a roadmap for employers to address the material, and spiritual needs of their organization members, to create a community environment that allows individuals to fulfill their needs to socialize and experiment the belongingness to a group.

As we can see, Baykal (2021) makes a brilliant assertion, comparing the role of religion in society to spirituality at the workplace. According to Durkheim, "collective beliefs are important in the path through which society becomes aware of itself since they contribute to the expression of the homogeneous physical movements constituting the ritual" (Baykal, p. 32).

Durkheim's sociology model emphasizes the importance of collective values and ideals, which bring people together as a group and give meaning to the lives of individuals and their activities in society. "In his societal approach, objects, rituals, and events can be accepted as some of the possible concretizations of ideals whereby society regulates itself" (Baykal, 2021, p. 33).

Religion's significance in society does not relate to something divine but, in its social function, is a source of solidarity and identification for the members of a community. Durkheim claims that

religion provides meaning for life, reinforcing the collectively held morals and social norms within a society (Baykal, 2021, p. 33); with the workplace being a component of most people's societal engagement, we can see religion has a role in the workplace, too.

Part of why religion and spirituality are helpful in building workplace connectedness is that they enhance people's perception of interconnectedness. "Spirituality is a universal force driving the need for self-transcendence and interconnectedness with all things in the universe and can be seen in groups and organizations" (Kriger, 2012, p. 24). Thus, this same need for connectedness can be met not only in the large context of society but also in the context of a working community. Furthermore, It is even more important for the individual to experience a sense of belonging to a smaller group, where he is appreciated for his affinity to the other members, vs. a larger social context, because of the strength of the emotional bonds to other individuals with closer proximity, like co-workers. According to workplace theory, the more people have values aligned with their organization, the better their efforts to fit and improve their performance within the organization (Baykal 2021, p. 29). In other words, the higher the congruence between individual values and inner-life to the organizational values, the better their alignment to the organization, which will result in higher engagement.

When employees feel that they can bring their whole selves to work and feel their contributions are appreciated in a workgroup, there is a sense of community and contribution to society.

People experience job satisfaction and are more engaged in the organization.

Thus, an important notion of dimension of spirituality at work is the notion that employees have spiritual needs (i.e., inner-life), just as they have physical, emotional, and cognitive needs, and these needs don't get left at home when they come to work. The existence of inner-life is related to two organizational behavior constructs: individual identity and social identity. Individual identity is part of a person's self-

concept or inner view of themselves, and their expression of that inner life is, in part, an expression of social identity. (Ashmos, Duchon & Plowman, 2005, p. 811)

This assertion of Ashmos, Duchon, and Plowman (2005) is fundamental because it tells us that the self-concept is mutually interdependent of the individual social identity. As psychological beings, we protect our "persona," but it would not exist unless we place it in a social context. The social context contributes to human connectedness and influences self-concept; it also relates to how people create a sense of meaning.

From a social psychology perspective, Michaels, Parkin, and Vallacher (2013) explain:

Meaning emerges from an individual's internal dialogs that guide the individual in imagining how other people perceive their actions. Collectively, these perspectives consider meaning as something consciously emergent from a person's actions and interactions with others or with his or her environment (Michaels et al. 2013, p. 104).

Thus, meaning is tied to social connections, and social connections exist in the workplace. Religion and spirituality in the workplace can be factors that can be leveraged to enhance meaning and social connectedness, which in turn are important for people to experience positive emotions, a rich inner-life, and a clear social identity.

We can then summarize the assertions in the figure below.

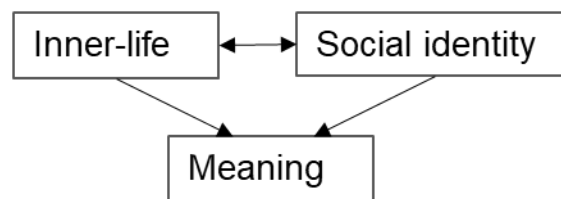


Figure 1: Meaning formation at work

The importance of social connection to the sense of personal meaning has been demonstrated in social psychology. In this regard, it is fundamental that people's inner lives are coherent with the values of their organization for them to find meaning at the workplace.

Action identification theory (Vallacher and Wegner, 1985, 1987, 2012) is a set of principles that specifies the links between the nature of the experience and the higher-order subjective nature of experience that provides meaning and purpose.

According to this theory, people prefer to identify themselves with actions that support their progress towards goals, nurture skills, maintain values and standards, and support their self-concepts (Michaels et al. I, 2013, p. 107).

In other words, self-concept is strengthened when people execute actions that are perceived as virtuous in the social context. This is a continuous process that is reinforced when people build a higher-level self-concept through the execution of those virtuous actions, which results in meaningful activities.

It has further been documented that people need to make sense of their lives in a meaningful way, because this is associated with higher levels of satisfaction in life. People seek to make meaning in their lives through the enjoyment of work, which leads to greater levels of satisfaction and general well-being. (Crescioni and Baumister, 2013).

With the decline of the societal influence of religion, which was the traditional central source for meaning in people's lives, there is a value gap that needs to be filled in modern times.

Baumeister proposed that individuals possess four needs of meaning:

First, people seek to establish a sense of purpose in their lives. Second, people seek to justify their actions in comparison to a set of moral standards. Third, people seek a sense of self-efficacy and control over their environment. Fourth, people seek to

establish a sense of self-worth and to be seen as worthwhile individuals by others (Crescioni and Baumister, 2013, p. 4).

The need for purpose is related to life goals. People make sense of their life narratives when they can associate their activities with achieving a purpose (Michaels et al., 2013). In this sense, they identify some activities as meaningful because these bring them closer to their life purpose. For example, suppose an athlete trains hard to compete and wins a medal. In that case, this makes all the effort worthwhile and meaningful, as he identifies himself according to a higher-level mental framework where he is a "champion." On the contrary, if he fails to succeed, he will be frustrated and feel that all his hard work was a waste of time. This frustration can lead to pathology like depression (Crescioni & Baumister, 2013, p. 4). When frustrated and feeling a misalignment between identity (being a champion) and the external world (failing at a competition), people tend to have conflicted meaning and feel disconnected. Religion and spirituality can help defend against this meaning conflict since these are integrative and transcend people's momentary experiences (Crescioni & Baumeister, 2013).

The second source of meaning is the need to justify one's actions relative to a set of moral standards because we humans need to have a clear compass of right and wrong, so the individual can feel that his or her actions are in accord with what is deemed right by those standards. In other words, our self-image is reaffirmed or tarnished based on how others think of us in the context of society. Our self-worth (3rd source of meaning) is directly correlated to the esteem with which others regard one, and this is related to our human need for belongingness. (Crescioni and Baumister, 2013, p. 7).

Last but no less important, the fourth source of meaning in life is a sense of self-efficacy because we are motivated when we can complete complex tasks. The higher the challenge, the higher the accomplishment and sense of self-realization. This one links to the need to have goals that bring us closer to our purpose. (Crescioni and Baumister, 2013, p. 6).

On the contrary, "a person whose values are threatened, for example, questions his or her identity and connection to the culture in which he or she lives" (Michaels et al., 2013, p. 112). This observation is enormously impactful when designing a new diversity strategy because, unless the values and initiatives of the organization are coherent with their member's inner-life, it will cause dissonance and disengagement, and such a system would not have a successful implementation. For the members of an organization to resonate and engage with the HR diversity strategy, they must feel that the organization's values and the leadership actions are coherent with their personal moral code. Avoiding value threat requires that workplaces embrace diversity in all forms, including those that are religious. I will discuss the importance of organizational values in the next section.

Chapter 5: Spirituality, religion, and self-actualization at the workplace

A model of spirituality at work must consider the inner-life of the employees and the careful design of company culture, which fosters a sense of community and purpose in the organization that creates a sense of joy or happiness when people achieve their goals. In addition, the company culture must be based on organizational values that help people connect with each other with authenticity and enable a framework in which leaders and followers can respectfully negotiate religious and spiritual diversity (Hicks, 2002).

Mitroff and Denton (1999) discovered that the spirituality of the leaders of an organization is critical when it comes to running a business. Each organization turns to different sources for knowledge on how to run an ethical company, which becomes the foundation for the organization's values.

In other words, ethical principles not only come first and have top priority but are the ultimate bottom line. Profits thus follow directly from being ethical, not the other way around. Even Stronger is the notion that if a person is concerned with profits instead of ethical principles, then profits will suffer. (Mitroff and Denton, 1999, p. 91)

Religion used to be the traditional source of values, but as Abraham Maslow wisely said: "We can no longer rely on tradition, on consensus, on cultural habit, on unanimity of belief to give us our values. These agreed-upon traditions are all gone" (Maslow, 1964, p. 45).

Suppose we can no longer rely on tradition because of our global and diverse work population. In that case, we must create company cultures inclusive of most religious traditions and spiritual

practices. For this purpose, we must carefully draft organizational values that direct constructive and respectful employee behaviors. These values can be formal and informal and provide a framework for employees' decision-making, as Ferguson and Milliman (2008) explain.

Core organizational values can be either formal or informal. In either case, values are the heart of an organization's culture and represent the organization's philosophical views, priorities, and sense of purpose. As such, the purpose and values of an organization provide the foundation for organizational practices and the context in which employees think, act and make decisions. (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008, p. 441).

In other words, organizational values guide decision-making, motivate and inspire people, and provide moral guidance for employees and managers to act ethically and socially responsibly (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008). Developing values based on spiritual principles is key to creating the organization's purpose. These organizational values can also help the members create a sense of meaning at work if these values align with their inner-life. Spirituality has been seen as having an important place in both the business and public sectors (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008). If the employees identify an important gap between their values and the organization's values, there will be a significant disengagement from the organization's purpose. Thus, they will not be aligned to the organization's goals and objectives. As previously examined, when there is misalignment between people's values and the organization's goals and objectives, this can cause people to feel less interconnected and take less meaning from their activities in the workplace. But, how do we develop an organizational culture that is inclusive and fosters respect, understanding, and connectedness among a very diverse workforce population?

Tenzin Gyatso Rimpoche, the XIV Dalai Lama and Nobel Prize winner, has been calling for interreligious dialog for at least three decades. He has made his position clear about the need to find ways to cooperate in a spirit of mutual acceptance and respect.

In such a world, I feel, it is vital for us to find a genuinely sustainable and universal approach to ethics, inner values, and personal integrity- an approach that can transcend religious, cultural, and racial differences and appeal to people at a fundamental human level. This search for a sustainable, universal approach is what I call the project of secular ethics (HH The XIV Dalai Lama, 2012, p. 12).

Although he is the global leader of Tibetan Buddhists, He has made very clear several times that he does not believe religion is the right source of universal ethics, because what is true for one person may not be true for another. He claims that ethics can also emerge simply as a natural and rational response to our very humanity and our shared human condition, without the need to frame it within a specific religious tradition. He believes in an inclusive approach to secular ethics, which has the potential to be universally accepted and has two basic principles:

The first principle is the recognition of our shared humanity and our shared aspiration to happiness and the avoidance of suffering; the second is the understanding of interdependence as a key feature of human reality, including our biological reality as social animals. From these two principles, we can learn to appreciate the inextricable connection between our well-being and that of others, and we can develop a genuine concern for others' welfare. Together, I believe, they constitute an adequate basis for establishing ethical awareness and cultivating inner values. It is through such values that we gain a sense of connection with others, and it is by moving beyond narrow self-interests that we find meaning, purpose, and satisfaction in life (HH The XIV Dalai Lama, 2012, p. 19).

This presentation about new secular ethics seems very much in line with the spirituality approach at the workplace that we presented in Chapter 5. The cultivation of inner values is as important as cultivating a constructive connection with others. As the Dalai Lama asserts, inner values are going beyond self-interest and working to benefit others to find meaning, purpose,

and satisfaction in life. This idea seems so simple and yet profoundly transformational both at the "self" and "society" level and leads us to a higher level of transcendence for the human mind. Embracing religion and spirituality in the workplace can contribute to such beneficial transformation.

On the other hand, Tenzin Gyatso has introduced us to the value of compassion, and loving-kindness, as the basis to develop true friendship and affection, which can only arise when there is a mutual sense of concern and respect. He also explains that although compassion arises from empathy, these are not the same. "Empathy is characterized by a kind of emotional resonance," while compassion, in contrast, is not just sharing the experience with others but also wishing to see them relieved of their suffering." (HH The XIV Dalai Lama, 2012, p. 55).

However, while sound motivation is the foundation of ethics and spirituality, a further research factor is crucial if we are to achieve a balanced and genuinely universal system of ethics. While the intention is the first and most important factor in guaranteeing that our behavior is ethical, we also need discernment to ensure that the choices we make are realistic and that our good intentions do not go to waste....the major religions of the world are all rich in such guidelines, and when these rules are inculcated from an early age, they become part of a person's internal value system. But, we need to go further than this in a globalized world in which religious, moral guidelines are not universally accepted. We need to use our discernment to gain understanding about the benefits of certain kinds of behavior and the negative consequences of other kinds" (HH The XIV Dalai Lama, 2012, p. 73-75).

In summary, cultivating the values of empathy, compassion, and loving-kindness would not be possible without the weight of discernment when facing difficult decisions and ethical dilemmas at the workplace.

One may argue that talking about compassion and loving-kindness as spiritual values in the workplace seems unrealistic. Still, I would like to note that in 1964, Abraham Maslow already published the results of a series of interviews with people that he considered "self-actualized" and worked in many different areas. The interviewees reported having experienced a sense of plenitude, connectedness, wholesomeness, joy, and happiness in life. He called these peak experiences.

Maslow claims that practically everything that happens in the peak experiences is naturalistic, and although in the past, they could be considered religious experiences, he had numerous cases of agnostics and atheists that also reported having those experiences at many different types of work, including artists. But why did he consider those as peak experiences? Maslow reported some of the characteristics as part of the so-called peak-experiences in his book "Religious, Values, and Peak-experiences" and reported that people experienced such when the experience included some of the following:

1. The whole universe is perceived as an integral and unified whole.
2. This experience is non-evaluating, non-comparing, or non-judging cognition. That is to say, figure and ground are less sharply differentiated.
3. The cognition of Being (B-cognition) that occurs in peak experiences tends to perceive external objects, the world, and individual people as more detached from worldly human concerns.
4. Perception in the peak-experiences can be relatively ego-transcending, self-forgetful, egoless, unselfish.
5. Peak experiences are one part of the operation definition of the statement that "life is worthwhile" or "life is meaningful."

6. In the peak-experience, there is a very characteristic disorientation in time and space, or even the lack of consciousness of time and space. Phrased positively, this is like experiencing universality and eternity.
7. The world seen in the peak-experience is seen only as beautiful, good, desirable, worthwhile, etc., and is never experienced as evil or undesirable. The world is accepted, despite the existence of evil, pain, disease or death. It is as if the peak-experience reconciled people to the presence of evil in the world.
8. (Being) B-cognition is much more passive and receptive, much more humble than normal perception is. It is much more ready to listen and much more able to hear.
9. In the peak-experience, there tends to be a loss, even though transient, of fear and anxiety, inhibition, of defense and control, of perplexity, confusion, conflict of delay and restraint..Fear seems to disappear.

In his same book, Maslow also presents what he calls the (Being) B-values, which resulted from descriptions of perception in Peak experiences: truth, honesty, reality, goodness, beauty, wholeness, acceptance, aliveness, uniqueness, perfection, completion, justice, simplicity, richness, effortlessnes, playfulness, self-sufficiency,

In his own words:

The B-values derived from the peak-experiences, as well as from other sources, may supply us with a perfectly naturalistic variety of certainty, of unity, of eternity, of universality. Of course, all these words, will have to be understood in a particular way that is novel and unfamiliar (Maslow, 1964, pl. 234).

If we read carefully about those experiences and reflect on them, it appears what Maslow describes aligns well with the concept of transcendence. Isn't that what would be the ultimate

goal of the human condition? To experience wholeness, connection with others, peace of mind, openness to hear and listen to others without judging? Do we need people who are less self-centered and humble, and respectful of others? This would be the key to effectively managing religious diversity.

With that said, I think it is clear that to address religious diversity in the workplace successfully; we need to develop an organizational culture that is inclusive and respectful of a diverse range of religious and spiritual practices, theist or non-theist.

Organizational leaders must consciously develop a model of spirituality at the workplace that not only enables self-actualization by mastering the intellectual skills at work but also provide an environment where people can come to work, feel appreciated for their unique talents, satisfy their fundamental need of belongingness, and pursue a higher life purpose by meaningful work. In order to achieve this level of experience in the workplace, we must educate the organization members on universal values such as integrity, benevolence, generativity, humanism, mutuality, justice, receptivity, respect, responsibility, trust, empathy, compassion and loving-kindness, and discernment, like the XIV Dalai Lama and Maslow, claim (see also Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2004).

Suppose we can provide a roadmap for organizational leaders to define the spiritual values that are key for their organization to become more ethical and inclusive. In that case, we will be setting the basis for people to experience self-actualization, happiness, and well-being at work. This roadmap is provided in the model of Spirituality and Religion at the Workplace (SRW) presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Introduction to a new model of Spirituality & Religion at the Workplace (SRW)

As discussed previously in this document, organizations need to address religious diversity at the workplace. I claim that an SRW model is a foundation for understanding the different dimensions that drive behavior in organizations and can help foster a more compassionate and harmonious life at the workplace, which will benefit organizations by increasing employee engagement.

The objective of this model is to identify how each of the dimensions of spirituality at work is linked to the different dimensions of the human being: the body, the self, his social identity, and what is called the Higher Mind. Likewise, this model provides a holistic view of the different constituents of spirituality at the workplace and helps us understand how these interact systemically to satisfy a range of human needs, from the most basic needs to the highest order needs.

The model is composed of four basic dimensions of the natural human condition: Body, Self, Others, and what I refer to as the Higher Mind.

Self-concept is strengthened when people execute actions that are perceived in the social context as virtuous in the social context (Michaels, 2013). This continuous process is reinforced when people build a higher-level self-concept through the execution of virtuous actions, which results in meaningful activities. (Crescioni and Baumister, 2013).

As I have already mentioned, our self-image is mainly based on the perception of our self-worth regarding a set of moral codes of reference in a group and the information we receive back from

the work community after our interactions within. On the other hand, the "self" dimension is based on our inner-life, which guides our behavior and pushes us to achieve our life purpose.

Spirituality & Religion @WP model I Valero-2021

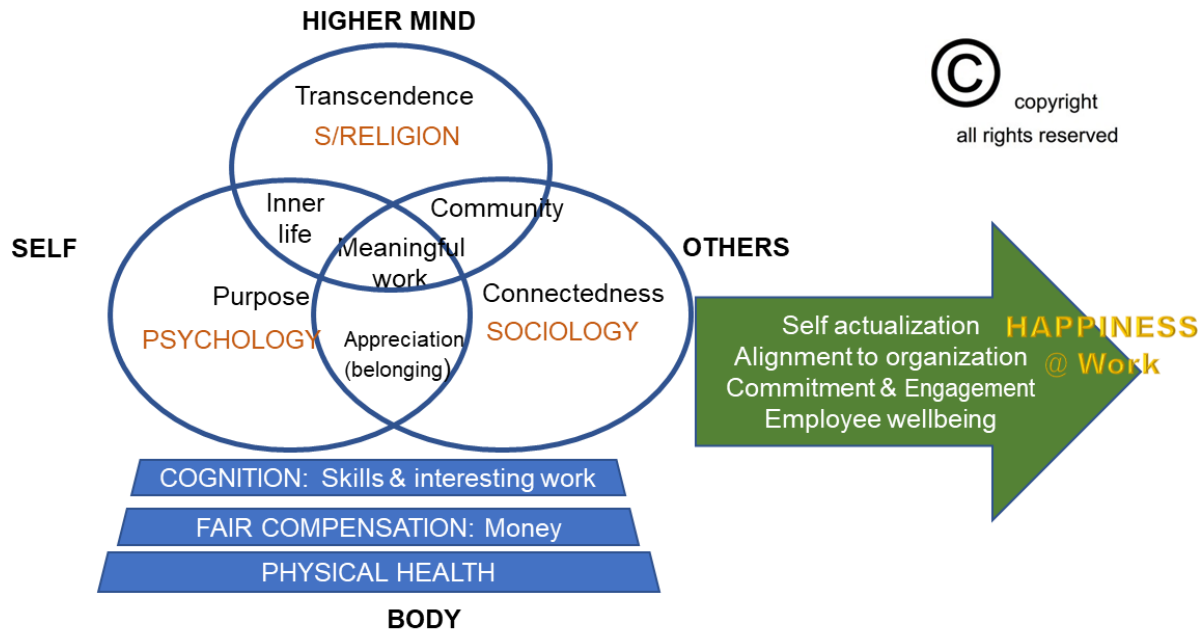


Figure 2: Spirituality and Religion at the Workplace Model. I. Valero, (2021)

Our psychological dimension, the inner **self**, is intimately intertwined with our social dimension with **others**; the feedback we receive from our social identity informs our self-perception or egoistic, three-dimensional mind. It is part of our human nature to constantly crave connection, love appreciation, and belongingness to a community (Crescioni and Baumister, 2013).

At the workplace, the organization becomes the social group of reference, where we can fulfill the social dimension of connectedness and belongingness." The need for community (belongingness, contact, groupness) is itself a basic need. Loneliness, isolation, ostracism, rejection by the group, are not only painful but pathogenic as well" (Maslow, 1964, p. 22). This is

why a model of religion and spirituality at the workplace is very important to help us develop ethical values and an organizational culture that sets the foundation for its members to feel appreciated and find meaning in the work they do.

I must say that quality research in social psychology and organizational management is needed to provide insight to help organizational leaders to develop a set of values that enable people to be authentic but respectful at the workplace and where everyone can experience a sense of belonging; scholars have documented that doing this will increase creativity and performance (Houghton et al., 2016).

When we do work that makes us feel good for ourselves and others, and is aligned with our own goals and objectives in life, we find a purpose to wake up every day and do our best.

Furthermore, if our purpose positively impacts the community, it allows us to leave something good behind us for posterity; we can find meaning in it and experience transcendence.

(Mirvis, 2000; Maslow, 1964; Héliot et al. 2020; XIV Dalai Lama, 2011). This transcendence is vital if people for the realization of peak experiences and self-actualization.

On the other hand, our self-perception or identity is not only influenced by the feedback from the social group but, also, by our greater spiritual nature, or what I call the **higher mind**, "the best easy way to become a better helper (worker), is to become a better person. But one necessary aspect of becoming a better person is via helping others" (Maslow, 1964, p. 20). In sum, the positive social connections that can be created in the workplace that embraces religious and spiritual diversity can enhance people's sense of meaning, belongingness, and efforts to contribute positively. These can then help people reach their fullest potential, an idea central to Maslow's concept of self-actualization.

What do we mean by self-actualization? What are the psychological characteristics that we are hoping to produce in our educational system? The self-actualized person is in a

state of good psychological health; his basic needs are satisfied, so what motivates him to become such a busy and capable person? For one thing, all self-actualized people have a cause they believe in, a vocation they are devoted to. When they say "my work", they mean their mission in life. Suppose you ask a self-actualized lawyer why he entered the field of law what compensates for all the routine and trivia. In that case, he will eventually say something like, "well, I just get mad when I see somebody taking advantage of somebody else. It isn't fair." Fairness to him is an ultimate value; he can't tell you why he values fairness any more than an artist can tell you why he values beauty. Self-actualized people, in other words, seem to do what they do for the sake of ultimate, final values, which is for the sake of principles that seem *intrinsically worthwhile*. They protect and love these values, and if these values are threatened, they will be aroused to indignation, action, and often self-sacrifice. These values are not abstract to the self-actualizing person; they are as much a part of them as their bones and arteries. Self-actualizing people are motivated by the eternal verities, the B-values, by pure truth and beauty in perfection. They go beyond polarities and try to see the underlying oneness; they try to integrate everything and make it more comprehensive. (Maslow, 1971, pp. 184-185).

This extract from his book "The Farther Reaches of Human Nature," which was published after his death in 1970, is what makes Abraham Maslow one of the pioneers in Humanistic and Positive Psychology. As mentioned before, he investigated the so-called peak-experiences, by interviewing individuals that were very relevant at that time. We also said that what makes self-actualized people experience abundance, contentment, and happiness are the (Being) B-values. But those values transcend the egoistic mind, and people are more concerned with helping others than pursuing worldly concerns such as material things, hedonistic pleasure or fame. By helping others, we can develop a higher state of mind, defeat self-centeredness,

embrace other ways of thinking and other ways of expressing our spiritual dimension.

Discernment, which is a higher level of cognition, is developed with the aim not only to improve self-efficacy but to increase the individual capacities to benefit others.

By developing this higher state of mind, we can be more empathetic, compassionate, and inclusive. The B-values guide our behavior, and ethical conduct becomes non-negotiable to keep peace of mind. When people feel that the organizational values embody integrity, inclusivity, compassion, mutual respect, and understanding, which are ethical values, it is much easier for them to identify with a possible higher version of themselves, which is likely to be achieved by practicing these values. If the ultimate goal of people is to be happy, and they find it in the organizational purpose and values, they will be much more aligned with the company culture.

By working on a higher state of mind that is healthy and emotionally stable, compassionate, receptive, and open to other ways of thinking, we can transcend our negative mental habits, be grateful, content, happy, and experience well-being.

Chapter 7: Benefits of Spirituality and Religion at the Workplace

So far, we have discussed the importance of religious salience at the workplace, the difference between religion and spirituality, presented a conceptual model of the constituents of spirituality at the workplace, and among other things, established the need for a secular model of ethics, to help organizational leaders to define a clear set of values that guide employee behavior towards inclusivity and integrity at the workplace, among other desired outcomes. Embracing this approach could yield many potential benefits.

Researchers have demonstrated that spirituality at the workplace mediates the interaction between the employees inner life and the organization. According to Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2004), the literature correlating workplace spirituality-related factors with performance can be shown to triangulate in three areas: **motivation, commitment, and adaptability**. An organization that creates an environment responsive to their employees' sense of purpose and values will reap the benefits of more motivated people in their work (Milliman et al., 2003). Furthermore, when workers are more motivated and engaged in their workplace culture, their commitment to their employer will be strengthened and better aligned with the organization.

Alignment to the organizational values involves the concept that employees desire to work in an organization that seeks to have a high sense of ethics or integrity and make a larger contribution than the typical company, to the welfare of employees, customers, and society (Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson, 2003, p. 430).

In Chapter Five we discussed the findings from Humanistic Psychology and Action Identification Theory, that people who live by B-values (a higher code of ethics) are more likely to experience **self-actualization** (Maslow, 1964), When people feel more self-actualized, they experience a deeper sense of meaning in what they do and this can enhance their connectedness and commitment to the workplace.

In addition, "research suggests that the encouragement of spirituality in the workplace can lead to benefits in the areas of **creativity, honesty and trust, personal fulfillment**, and commitment, which will ultimately lead to increases organizational performance" (Neck & Krishnakumar, 2002 p.156).

Other authors like Sharma and Kumra (2020) have conducted experimental research, and they concluded that workplace spirituality and organizational justice significantly influence employee engagement. This is what we will review more in-depth next.

Engagement and Commitment

Employee engagement involves physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects of the work experience and relates to the meaning people find in their work." An engaged employee exerts significant effort toward their work, but the effort reflects enjoyment, not compulsion" (Roof, 2013).

As we have explained before, the essence of the workplace community is that "it involves a deeper understanding of the connection among people, including support, freedom of expression, and genuine caring" (Milliman et al. 2003, p. 429).

Thus, if people feel positively connected to their work community, have a job that they can execute to the best of their cognitive abilities, and freely embrace the company values because these are aligned with their spirituality or religious beliefs, they will find their role meaningful and engage in the company culture and goals. Workplace spirituality involves the inclusion of new

humanistic variables or relevance for Personal-Environment (PE) fit theory, and it can provide clarity by offering greater specificity to the variables examined by PE theory (Milliman, Ausar & Bradley-Gest, 2016, p.) In other words, understanding the spiritual values that guide employee behavior will help HR develop a culture with universal values and attract and retain the mind-liked talent.

In 2013, Richard A. Roof reached out to his more than 900 connections in LinkedIn to survey them and examine the spirituality-employee engagement relationship, including underlying dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption. The usable responses were 124 surveys using the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES). The results demonstrated that spirituality positively and significantly correlates with engagement, vigor, and dedication to employees' work, but not absorption.

If spirituality at the workplace improves employee engagement, it is to be expected that commitment to the organization will also be improved. In 2003, Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson published the results of 200 surveys conducted to students of an MBA program. Their findings indicate that the individual's spirituality is positively related to the organizational commitment of the individual. (p. 439). Their second hypothesis proposed that the greater the spirituality of the individual, the lower their intention to quit the organization; this hypothesis was confirmed, and the results indicated that this is strongly correlated to the validation of another hypothesis that when individuals believe that the organization satisfy their needs and have a sense of personal adequacy in their organizations, they have a higher organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and citizen behavior. (Milliman et al., 2003, p. 433). This is how important it is for the sense of community and belongingness to keep key talent in our *organization*.

Performance

Employee engagement and commitment are crucial for the organization because engaged employees will exert more effort toward their work. Assuming that employees have good leaders (which is beyond the present work but is a subject that deserves further quality research), we can assume that performance will be much better.

People bring their whole selves to work, and increasingly we see that the whole self includes the spiritual self. The feelings people have about the fundamental meaning of who they are and the contributions they are making to the greater good are key to the effort they make at work (Duchon & Plowman, 2005). Giacalone & Jurkiewicz (2004) mention that culture is a causal variable in the growth and development of an organization and, more specifically, a determinant of labor productivity.

Empirical research demonstrates that performance in organizations that embrace spirituality at the workplace is significantly higher than in those that neglect it. For example, Duchon and Plowman (2005) conducted exploratory research in a large healthcare system. They found that work unit spirituality was significantly higher in the three higher performance units than in the lower performance unit.

Mental Health and Well-being

We must consider that work is where people spend most of their time, and for many, their work organization has become the most important community. Thus, for people to feel happy and self-actualized, they must find some meaning in their work life. For some people, work and colleagues at work have even taken the place of family or social groups (Karakas, 2009). Particularly during the COVID19 pandemic, when we were confined to work from home and it became impossible to socialize physically, the social network at work became more significant.

On the other hand, with increasing centrality of work in people's lives, associated problems such as stress, burnout, and workaholism have also increased (Karakas, 2009). This is particularly noticeable in the healthcare sector for obvious reasons, where spirituality at work has demonstrated to be a great support for employees to buffer the adverse effects of emotional labor. By creating a working environment that integrates values such as respect, humanism, integrity, and ethical behavior, people have built resilience to overcome high levels of stress and burnout, particularly in the healthcare sector. During the COVID19 pandemic, we witnessed numerous times captured in videos and shared through social media, when doctors and nurses resorted to prayer to support themselves, their patients, and family members to keep going in this health crisis.

Physicians' religious identity affects how doctors perceive and attend end-to-life care: very religious physicians are less likely to withdraw life-sustaining treatment or agree on euthanasia than less religious physicians. Religious physicians are more likely to support the hopes of their patients, and are better able to deal with the grief associated with caring for dying children and their families compared to non-religious physicians. (Héliot et al., 2020).

Health workers who practice spiritual values (religious or not) can show more compassion and mercy toward their patients because "it comes from within."

But not everyone is religious, How do people resort to spirituality to alleviate stress and burnout? In 2012, Duchon and Petchsawang conducted exploratory research to analyze the relationship between meditation practice, spirituality at the workplace, and performance. From this work, they redefined spirituality at the workplace as "having compassion toward others, experiencing a mindful inner consciousness in the pursuit of meaningful work that enables transcendence" (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2012, p.191). Furthermore, since meditation practices

share psychological benefits like prayer, this spiritual practice can enhance mental health and well-being:

Insight meditation trains the mind to seek a sense of peace and happiness because increased concentration enhances a sense of calm and a sense of energy, both of which can then be used to see things clearly and insightfully. A trained mind can be applied to many circumstances, and so there should be carry-over benefits, including the potential of performing better work. A calm, disciplined mind, focused on the present, gathering energy is a mind that can better judge the requirements of the moment, make better decisions, and understand more completely the nuances of interpersonal relations. Thus, a trained mind ought to be an asset in the workplace, as it is a mind that can attend to both routine and novel job requirements, can focus on the self or on a group, and through observation, learn more effectively (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2012, p. 198).

The enhanced mental skills associated with practicing meditation are similar to those of prayer, so embracing a model of spirituality at the workplace is key to fostering mental health and well-being.

By focusing on the spiritual qualities of meaningfulness and **joy**, researchers have observed enhanced job involvement, organizational identification, **work satisfaction, greater honesty, trust and commitment**, and improved performance (Duchon & Plowman, 2005).

Meaningful work is about cognitively meaningful tasks, but it is also about work that creates a sense of joy, connecting workers to a larger good and things viewed by the worker as necessary in life (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Michaels, 2013).

Chapter 8: The role of meaning and spirituality in job happiness.

In the end, everything we do is about the pursuit of happiness. The things we buy, the things we do, the experiences we seek or avoid, we do all to be happy. Practicing some spirituality to be fulfilled and content is part of our human nature.

It still has not been agreed on what dimension job happiness could have. However, the experiences of happiness oriented towards biological-psycho-social-spiritual approach can be classified as nature of human existence and in terms of content, as one of the dimensions of psychological happiness (joy and enthusiasm in the human mental space to work), social happiness (joy and enthusiasm from job social ties and relations) spiritual happiness (joy and enthusiasm related to job purposeful and useful efforts) biological happiness (feeling of physical vitality at the time of performing job duties)...However, each of these dimensions may practically not be segregated from other dimensions. Still, each dimension covers a dimension of human experience in dealing with job and job duties. Available research shows that meaning and spirituality at work are among the potential factors for the reinforcement and promotion of job happiness level in different dimensions (Golpavar & Abedini, 2010, p. 257).

Seeking connection, acceptance, love, appreciation, self-esteem, and transcendence is part of our human nature. We are not machines, we are spirits in a human experience, and we must embrace ourselves as a whole, not compartmentalize; we long for authenticity and deserve to be happy and self-fulfilled, to be able to share the best of our humanity with others. (Maslow, 1971; XIV Dalai Lama, 2016).

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Religion is an overlooked aspect of diversity and continues to be an increasing concern and source of conflict in organizations, making it very important for diversity researchers to incorporate and focus on the construct (King et al., 2009). Unfortunately, the research on this topic has only scratched the surface of the problem in organizations and deserves closer scholarly research to make the workplace more inclusive and respectful. Moreover, these answers are needed not only in the US but around the globe. Considering economic globalization, there is a call for international quality research from researchers in this field.

On the other hand, the subject of spirituality at the workplace has been on the agenda for more than three decades already; still, most of the studies have been empirical or exploratory. So far, the results of those experimental researches have demonstrated that embracing spirituality at the workplace brings positive outcomes such as employee commitment, engagement, mental health, and well-being, among other positive effects. Still, there is a lack of compelling statistical data that would allow us to formulate scientific conclusions. Therefore, future research should include interdisciplinary researchers to realize longitudinal studies in organizations.

We have reviewed the concept of spirituality at the workplace and its conceptual differences from religion. Appreciating the subtle difference between religion and spirituality is essential to understanding the scholarship. Furthermore, utilization of my model of spirituality at the workplace can help bridge division among different religious practitioners, agnostics, and atheists.

Following this extensive literature review, it is my conclusion that to begin to grasp the benefits of embracing spirituality at the workplace, there must be first an understanding of its

constituents, which we presented in a new model in Chapter 6. Our self-identity depends not only on our inner life but also on the feedback we receive from our social group. Our self-concept is uplifted or destroyed by the feedback we receive from our work community based upon shared values. Developing a set of shared values is paramount to drive ethical behavior in organizations so, we must continue to study how values such as integrity, benevolence, generativity, humanism, mutuality, justice, receptivity, respect, responsibility, trust, empathy, compassion and loving-kindness, and discernment, as the XIV Dalai Lama and Maslow claim (see also Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2004), fit into different organizations, with different visions and purposes.

More workers are needed who can embrace the values mentioned above, such as benevolence, respect, and integrity at the workplace to make it more inclusive. In addition, we must turn our attention to understanding how to embrace spirituality and religion successfully. People need to feel appreciated; therefore, constructive connections between the members of an organization are critical for its members to experience a sense of belongingness. Furthermore, the workplace becomes the place where we self-actuate, where we can find a sense of meaning and transcend. According to Maslow, those individuals who exhibit a concern for others, or as the XIV Dalai-Lama would call it, empathy and loving-kindness, are the ones who experience wholeness, peace of mind, and well-being.

I am convinced that there is vast opportunity for interdisciplinary research between organizational behavior specialists, social psychologists, religious studies scholars, and practicing human resources managers, but we need to create "the space" to do it now. We must lend our voices to the urgent need to joining efforts to do it, to make the workplace a better place for all. We must develop newer and better ways for people to be fulfilled, self-actualized, and be happy at the workplace.

Chapter 10: Rich points for future research

The role of leadership in encouraging spirituality at the workplace.

As we know, organizations need a leader to guide all stakeholders to march toward goals and objectives. Houghton, Neck, and Krishnakumar (2016) mention six types of leadership that may facilitate workplace spirituality: spiritual leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership, ethical leadership, empowering leadership, and shared leadership. Although the study of leadership is out of the scope of this thesis, we would like to make a special mention to the Spiritual Leadership approach because it seems to be the one that best can help to facilitate religious diversity and workplace spirituality, and in addition, there are published results that demonstrate higher engagement, commitment and positive impact to the bottom-line.

We defined spiritual leadership as comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they can have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership. This entails (1) creating a vision wherein the organization members experience a sense of calling and that their life has meaning and makes a difference, (2) establishing a social/organizational culture based on altruistic love, whereby leaders and followers have genuine care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others, thereby producing a sense of membership and being understood and appreciated (Fry, 2003, p. 19).

The components of the Spiritual Leadership approach are (1) Vision, which reflects high ideals and encourages hope/faith, (2) Altruistic Love, which is broken down into eleven values Trust/loyalty, forgiveness/acceptance/gratitude, integrity, honesty, courage, humility, kindness, compassion, patience/meekness/endurance, excellence and fun, (3) Hope/Faith, (4) Inner-life.

The model is based on the premise that the leader must develop personal spiritual leadership first, which requires:

an inner-life practice that is the source of hope/faith in a vision of service to others, through personal values based on altruistic love. By committing to a vision of service to our key stakeholders, we discover the calling to make a difference in other people's lives and, therefore, have a sense that our life has meaning and purpose. In living the values of altruistic love through the care, concern, and appreciation of both one's self and others, we experience membership and a sense of belonging and being understood and appreciated (International Institute for Spiritual Leadership, p. 10).

According to the proponents, that inner-life can be religious, meditation, yoga, spending time in nature, or other, but the important thing is that all the members of the organization experience a sense of membership and appreciation within a company culture that is centered on altruistic love values.

Trying to clarify what do leaders do to create a vision, exhibit altruistic behavior, and develop loving relationships from a spiritual perspective, Milliman and Ferguson (2008), published analysis to the case of the renowned entrepreneur Steve Bigari, and founder of his non-profit American's family (AF) organization. Using the interview method, they were able to map out the behaviors that Steve exhibited along the years of his career and how his strategies to support his lower-income employees by providing company transportation, a car loan program, financial training, and other programs to support their growth embodied the components and values of spiritual leadership. His generous programs resulted not only in a positive impact on the life of his employees but improved 74% employee satisfaction, 50% employee turnover, and a significant reduction in store operating expenses. Bigari's leadership approach positively impacted employee well-being and organizational productivity.

In summary, the case of Steve Bigari as an exemplar of a Spiritual Leader demonstrates that embracing spirituality at the workplace improves employee commitment and well-being. In addition, the benefits of embracing spirituality at the workplace resulted in a much-reduced turnover and higher revenue for the business. More success stories from implementing the model of spiritual leadership can be found in later publications by the International Institute for Spiritual Leadership, his founder Louis W. Fry and his consulting partners. It is necessary to conduct more scholarly research on this approach and expand its inclusion in higher education programs.

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About the Author

Ivonne Valero is the youngest of a family of six and grew up in a small town by the Gulf of Mexico, where the primary industry is Oil & Gas. Her parents were teachers, and she grew up with a strong academic inclination. Born within a Catholic tradition but not into a religious family, since early childhood, Ivonne demonstrated an interest in spirituality; and she started bible studies of her own will at eleven years old, and at fifteen, she joined the Academy for Future Science, searching for answers in a non-traditional belief system. However, until her early forties, she joined Casa Tibet Mexico as a student of Tibetan Buddhism. Buddhist philosophy completely changed her perspective, and she developed a growing interest in expanding her understanding of different religious traditions.

In 1993, she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Industrial and Systems Engineering at the Tec de Monterrey, aiming for a well-compensated career. In 2002, she graduated from the same university's MBA program while continuing a successful corporate career in Global Sourcing and Consulting for more than twenty years. Nevertheless, the need for a career change motivated her to seek a graduate program in Religious Studies, and in 2020, she received acceptance to the University of South Florida, where she graduated in May 2022. She is now dreaming about working soon in consulting, coaching, teaching, and hopefully, one day opening her own Retreat Center where she can host teachers from different religious traditions. Her mission is to help others find their true vocation, grow their skills, pursue their dreams in whatever line of work they choose, and be happy at any age.