

# Spiritual Capital

## An Important Asset of Workplace and Community?

Review of Literature and Concepts  
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## Executive Summary

In considering the functioning of both businesses and communities, recent literature has recognised the importance of several ‘capitals’. Not only is ‘financial capital’ important, so also is ‘human capital’, in terms of the human skills and resources on which a business or community can draw. ‘Social capital’, the quantity and quality of relationships through which people cooperate with each other to achieve common ends, is also necessary. To this range of ‘capitals’ has been added the notion of ‘spiritual capital’.

The term ‘spiritual capital’ is being used in a variety of ways, from the knowledge of religious traditions and levels of relationship with others in religious communities to involvement in the search for meaning and interconnectedness with others. It is the latter usages which have been most common in relation to the workplace and which build on the ‘spirituality in the workplace’ literature.

The primary argument of those advocating attention to spiritual capital is that organisations operate from a set of values and purposes. Spiritual capital is reflected in what a community or organisation exists for, aspires to and takes responsibility for. The higher the values and purposes out of which an organisation operates the greater that organisation’s spiritual capital. If an organisation operates out of values of service, if it is focussed on the wellbeing of human beings, it can be said to have high levels of spiritual capital.

Further, those who work within the organisation may be motivated by having their own aspirations for the wellbeing of others reflected in their work. They may find meaning in their work as it provides opportunities for them to achieve their aspirations.

The ‘spirituality in the workplace’ literature, on which the literature of ‘spiritual capital’ builds, has noted that the inner life of people may be nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community. It has pointed to the importance of inter-relationships between people in the workplace, but also of the meaningfulness of work. Some studies have suggested that companies that seek to enhance spirituality in the workplace tend to have employees who are more creative, loyal and productive than companies that stifle spirituality.

Some researchers have noted hesitation among employees to use spiritual concepts within the public nature of the workplace, particularly when they are aware that different employees bring very different frameworks and belief systems to thinking about spirituality. Australian research has shown that more than half of all Australians do not consider themselves as ‘spiritual persons’. Many Australians find the meaningfulness of life primarily in their families and friends rather than in their work.

Further, it has been argued that the notion of ‘spirituality’ is primarily an individualistic notion, and the idea of ‘spiritual capital’ could be used to focus attention of the inner life of the individual, diverting attention from unjust social structures and unjust aspects of capitalism itself.

However, others argue that the term ‘spiritual capital’ has the capacity to present an alternative focus for businesses and community. It encourages them to focus on the wellbeing of humanity rather than on the accumulation of financial wealth.

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# Part 1.

## Evolving Uses of the Term ‘Spiritual Capital’

### A Range of ‘Capitals’

Every business needs financial capital. It is a fundamental asset for the purchase of resources used in the business and for paying staff. It is also the asset that businesses receive from the goods or services that they produce and sell. The effectiveness of a business is usually measured in the gain in financial capital over time.

Businesses need more than financial capital, however, and several other ‘capitals’ have been identified as fundamental assets. The first of these is ‘human capital’. Every business depends on the human capacities and skills on which it can draw. That human input is essential for turning primary resources and time into products and services, and, very often, the higher the quality of that input the more productive the business. There may be some exchange of human capacity for skills when activities are automated or when machines take over from manual labour. Nevertheless, human skills remain a prime prerequisite in every business.

A third capital is ‘social capital’. In terms of businesses, this may be understood as the ‘social glue’ that holds the people in the organisation together. It is the quality and quantity of relationships within the business. It is the trust, cooperation and goodwill among the employees which enables them to work together to get the job done. It is the relationship between management and employees through which instructions are followed by employees, information about problems in accomplishing tasks are heard by management, and through their combined activities production occurs. Social capital is about the relationships between businesses and their suppliers and between businesses and their clients. Good relationships are essential to ensure the business has the supplies of materials it needs. ‘Social capital’ also has to do with the recognition and respect that a business has among potential and actual clients which leads them to purchase the goods or use the services.

If a business has adequate financial resources, human resources, and good relationships among the staff and with suppliers and clients, will it be successful? In other words, does the quality and quantity of ‘financial capital’, ‘human capital’ and ‘social capital’ ensure a successful business if the external environment is right and its products and services are desired? Some people have argued that there is a need for a further concept of capital: ‘spiritual capital’. This is a capital which is said to lie at the heart of the ethos of a workplace. This

paper will examine the notion of ‘spiritual capital’ and the discussion that has surrounded it.

Before proceeding to that discussion, it should be noted that this notion of ‘capitals’ is not only relevant to businesses. Equally it can be applied to communities. In communities of every size, from families through to nations and to the global community, the functioning of the community can be said to depend, at least partly, on financial resources, human skills and capacities, and relationships of trust and goodwill through which people work together towards common ends.

Spiritual capital may also be important in communities. It is arguably important that communities need common values and aspirations, a ‘common ethos’, in order for them to solve common problems and achieve the common good. The very existence of the human race may ultimately depend on our common aspirations to overcome the looming global threats of environmental collapse, and hence, on global spiritual capital.

### What Is ‘Spiritual Capital’?

The term ‘spiritual capital’ is not yet in widespread use. One of the reasons for this may be that it has been used in a variety of ways, often not consistent with each other. In 2003 the Templeton Foundation put the term on the agenda of academics in religious studies by inviting researchers to submit proposals for grants to explore the term ‘spiritual capital’. As a prelude to this study, the Templeton Foundation asked a number of prominent sociologists of religion in the United States to contribute papers on their notions of spiritual capital.

Several of these papers saw spiritual capital largely in terms of ‘religious capital’. In these papers ‘religious capital’ referred to the individual’s accumulated experiences, habits, relationships and understanding that arose out of a religious tradition. Spiritual capital, then, was a measure of people’s experience of religious education, attendance at church and their understanding of what happens in a church, and their habits of prayer, for example (Finke 2003).

This notion of spiritual capital has been used in some historical research. One doctoral thesis described how citizens in nineteenth century Philadelphia accumulated spiritual capital in the form of outward signs of commitment to religious principles in order to secure their social status and strengthen class identity (Rzeznik 2006).

Another book extends this notion of spiritual capital as accumulated experiences, habits and knowledge from religion to the realm of spiritualism and magic. Raquel Romberg (2003), in her book *Witchcraft and Welfare: Spiritual Capital and the Business of Magic in Modern Puerto Rico*, sees spiritual capital in relation to the idea of a spiritual economy in which magic and religious goods and services are bought and sold in the marketplace.

Other papers on the Templeton Foundation website focussed on the social aspects of religious/spiritual capital. Iannaccone and Klick (2003), for example, argue that spiritual capital is built in the form of social relationships which come about through the sharing of religious traditions. Finke (2003, p.4) also notes that religious intermarriage and family relationships contribute to religious capital. However, it is noted that some relationships in religious organisations may be exclusive in that they distinguish between 'good' and 'acceptable' people and those who are not so, and thus, antithetical to the development of 'good' or more inclusive forms of social capital (Finke 2003, p.6).

Berger and Hefner (2003) have a similar notion of spiritual capital, seeing it primarily as a subset of social capital. They argued that

social capital refers to the power, influence, knowledge, and dispositions an individual acquires by virtue of membership in a network or group. Spiritual capital might be thought of as a sub-species of social capital, referring to the power, influence, knowledge, and dispositions created by participation in a particular religious tradition (Berger and Hefner 2003, p.3).

In communities where many people are involved in religious organisations and where these organisations are held in high social regard, it makes sense that relationships within those organisations and knowledge that relates to involvement might be seen as advantageous to the wider community. However, in a social environment such as that of Australia, where involvement in religious organisations is an activity of a minority group and an expression of personal preference, such a notion of spiritual capital would appear to have little intuitive appeal.

A broader notion of spiritual capital may be more appropriate to the Australian scene. While Woodberry (2003) and Finke (2003) see little of spiritual capital beyond religious capital rooted in religious traditions, Iannaccone and Klick (2003) see religious capital as a subset of spiritual capital. However, they do not explore what spiritual capital might mean as distinct

from religious capital.

A somewhat different notion of spiritual capital is developed by Theodore Roosevelt Malloch (2003) in another paper from the Templeton Foundation project. He sees spiritual capital not as a subset of human or social capital but as 'the third leg of the economic stool', as something which stands alongside those other forms of capital. In Malloch's essay, spiritual capital arises out of a spiritual worldview, which may be connected with, but is not limited to, religious traditions. Spiritual capital consists of the 'faith commitments' of individuals and the ethical values, the habits of life and the beliefs about the world which are embedded in those faith commitments, he says. Malloch suggests that 'economic development can be viewed as creative management of endowed resources by stewards who act on their faith commitments' (Malloch 2003).

The concept of spiritual capital developed by Malloch is a little closer than that in other papers in the Templeton Foundation project to the notion developed by Zohar and Marshall, in their book *Spiritual Capital: Wealth We Can Live By*. Their definition of spiritual capital is 'the amount of spiritual knowledge and expertise available to an individual or culture, where spiritual is taken to mean "meaning, values and fundamental purposes"' (Zohar and Marshall 2004, p.41). They see spiritual capital as involving 'a sense of wider meaning, the possession of an enlivening or inspiring vision, the implementation of fundamental human values and a deep sense of wider purpose' (Zohar and Marshall 2004, p.41). Zohar and Marshall argue that spiritual capital has nothing to do with religion or belief systems. They see religion as being primarily about otherworldly pursuits. Spiritual capital, they argue, is different from religion in that it is about enhancing life in this world.

As Zohar and Marshall define it, spiritual capital is a characteristic or an asset of individuals or of cultures. Just as social capital may be interpreted as the qualities and quantity of relationships and networks which an individual or organisation has, so spiritual capital may be the knowledge and expertise, the sense of meaning, vision and sense of purpose that an individual or organisation has.

Why Zohar and Marshall define spiritual capital as 'the amount of spiritual knowledge and expertise' is not easy to understand in a context where there is no well-defined body of spiritual knowledge. Relating spirituality to values rather than knowledge makes more sense and spiritual capital can certainly be conceived as the values and fundamental purposes that

give meaning to the life of an individual, organisation or culture.

It also seems inappropriate to talk about the ‘amount’ of spiritual capital if one is talking about values and fundamental purposes. Nevertheless, one might measure spiritual capital at least partly by the extent to which values and purposes are held consistently by an individual or the extent to which they permeate every aspect of an organisation.

Spiritual capital is seen in the shared framework of values and purposes in an organisation or community. As such, it is a ‘glue’ that binds people together. However, it may also be more than the sum of the spiritual capital of individuals. Zohar and Marshall explain, ‘spiritual capital is reflected in what a community or organisation exists for, aspires to and takes responsibility for (Zohar and Marshall 2004, p.41). According to Zohar and Marshall (2004, p.42), the spiritual capital of an organisation is the nature of its ‘moral and a motivational framework’.

Zohar and Marshall have provided new terminology for what others have described as the vision or the mission of an organisation. However, in using the term ‘spiritual capital’, they are also suggesting that the vision, mission or values need to be linked with general human purposes, with what management, employees and clients consider life to be about.

Zohar and Marshall implicitly argue that there is, or there should be, a particular content to spiritual capital. They see a vision of the future that is built around simple consumption as ultimately self-destructive. The world simply cannot sustain the continued increase in consumption on which much of the Western world is built. Rather a spiritual vision should involve the wellbeing of all the world’s people.

## Levels of Spiritual Capital

For Zohar and Marshall spiritual capital is not simply the set of values and fundamental purposes by which an individual or organisation operates. In their minds, there is a clear hierarchy of values and purposes, associated with a hierarchy of motivations. Hence, there are levels of spiritual capital that correspond to the place in the hierarchy of those values, purposes and motivations. Zohar and Marshall also suggest that spiritual capital is built as the values and purposes of an organisation are transformed and higher values and fundamental purposes are adopted.

Some people and organisations operate out of fear, for example. They operate defensively as a response to perceived threats and challenges. Zohar and Marshall (p.80) suggest that in operating out of fear, strategies are reactive and cautious. The fundamental purpose is one of protecting one’s self. ‘Fear’ is low in their hierarchy.

A little higher than ‘fear’ in the hierarchy of values and motivations is ‘anger’. If people act out of anger, for example, they tend to blame everyone else for their feelings. They are often rebellious rather than cooperative, seeking revenge for its own sake. As a business strategy, anger ‘leads to finding some way to beat, destroy or damage the competition, even if cooperation might have led to a better result’ (Zohar and Marshall, p.76). Like fear, anger is a negative motivation associated with the deficiencies in human needs.

On the other hand, the motivation of mastery is considered positive. Zohar and Marshall see it in the master stonemason, for example, who ‘wields with his hammer all the skills and all the power of master stonemasons throughout history’ (p.79). Motivated by the desire for mastery, the person draws on all the skills, knowledge and wisdom that has been accumulated over time. Mastery, they say, involves seeing the bigger picture, and has visions and strategies that are long-term. It is grounded in collective wisdom and sees the possibility for innovation. While mastery is undoubtedly a positive value, and as something many would wish to aspire to, one might still ask if an organisation that was motivated by the desire for ‘mastery’ could be said to have ‘spiritual capital’.

Higher again on Zohar and Marshall’s hierarchy of values and motivations is ‘higher service’. An organisation or community that operates out of motivation to ‘higher service’ is dedicated to using whatever capacities they have to further the wellbeing of those they serve. They are not concerned to add to their own power or aggrandizement (p.85). An organisation or community which operates out of such motivations would have a high level, then, of ‘spiritual capital’.

Values and fundamental purposes are closely associated with motivations. Fear, as a motivation, is associated with values of security and the desire for protection. Higher service, on the other hand, as a motivation is associated with transpersonal values of goodness, justice, and the alleviation of suffering, even the salvation or enlightenment of others, say Zohar and Marshall (p.84).

Hence, spiritual capital has to do with motivations. Zohar and Marshall suggest that spiritual capital is associated with ‘higher’ motivations and values. Companies that build social capital, they say, are companies which are inspired by deep human values of ‘saving life, raising the quality of life, improving health, education, communication, meeting basic human needs, sustaining the global ecology, and reinforcing a sense of excellence, pride in service, and the like’ (pp.43-44).

Zohar and Marshall root their evaluation of particular values and motivations in Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs. This hierarchy is represented in Figure 1 (2004, p.59). Higher motivations have to do with the higher human needs for self-esteem, self-actualisation and peak experiences. The lower motivations have to do with belonging, security and survival, which have been referred to as ‘deficiency needs’.

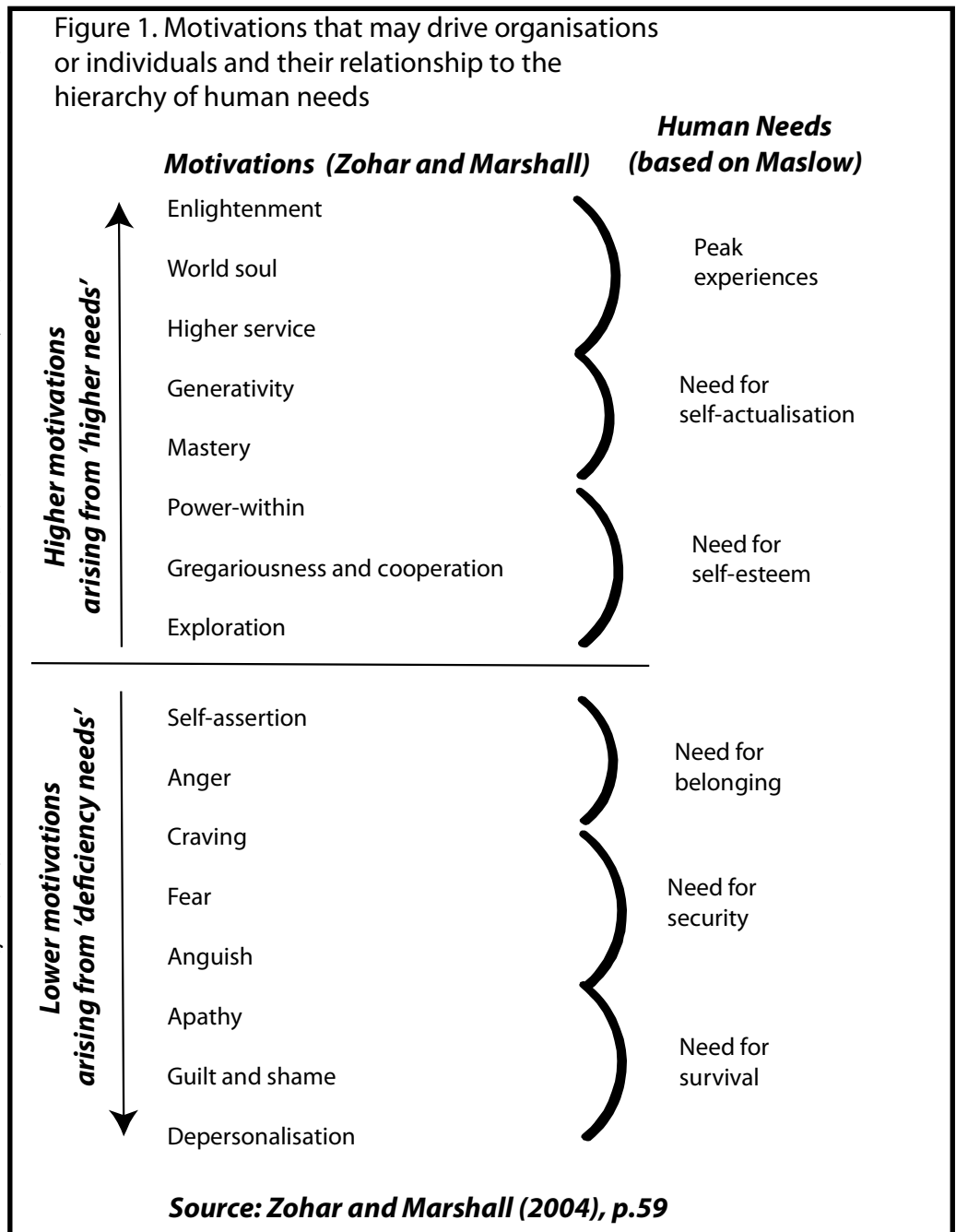
Zohar and Marshall suggest that building spiritual capital involves moving up the hierarchy of needs in the scale of motivations. As organisations or individuals move up the scale, so there are also shifts in the underlying visions, goals and strategies. Hence, a shift up the hierarchy of motivations will be a paradigm shift radically changing the whole way an organisation operates.

These ideas may be applied to communities and even to nations. Zohar and Marshall hint, in passing, that the motivations of a government may be seen in the nature of its educational system. Is that system seeking to instil certain ideas through fear, perhaps in order to maintain the security of the country, or is it seeking to help students achieve self-

actualisation or even peak experiences?

However, the links between human needs and organisational motivations are not altogether clear in the account that Zohar and Marshall give. What are the links, for example, between the need for survival and the motivations of guilt and shame?

More problematic is the logical jump that Zohar and Marshall have made from a psychological description of human needs to an ethical theory of what sorts of motivations and values should drive individuals and organisations. It is not clear that there is anything ‘wrong’ in the need for survival or security. Many organisations struggle for survival and for security as do human beings. That does not mean that these organisations are motivated by guilt and shame or



anguish and fear.

Some psychologists have argued that human needs are not experienced hierarchically as Maslow maintained. For example, there are times when great creativity occurs in the midst of suffering or even when one's survival is threatened. People are sometimes able to reach out to others when their own security is threatened.

Although the grounding of the ethics of organisations and communities in the hierarchy of human needs is suspect from logical and ethical perspectives, the idea that organisations have different motivational frameworks associated with different purposes and values makes sense. People readily distinguish between organisations which are largely self-seeking and those more focussed on service to their clients and the wider population.

It has been found that the level of confidence the Australian public has in an organisation is directly and strongly related to the sense that the organisation is serving the interests of its clients rather than of itself. This is the primary reason that charitable organisations, for example, enjoy a much higher level of public confidence than large companies (Hughes, Black et al. 2007, p.93).

Some organisations seek to build spiritual capital, or at least, build a profile of public respectability, by additional activities outside their main purposes through which they give to others. They may make payments to charities or donate products to special causes. On the other hand, as has been noted in a review of the examples of companies that have done such things, they may also act unethically in their general business activities. The reputation of high levels of spiritual capital can be quickly dispelled if an organisation is found to have acted unethically. (See, for example, the critique of the companies identified as having 'spiritual capital' by Zohar and Marshall in Brumback (2005)).

Zohar and Marshall link individual motivations to SQ or 'spiritual intelligence' which they argue is an innate human capacity for forming meanings and values. SQ is distinct both from general intelligence (IQ) and emotional intelligence (EQ). It is the capacity human beings have to integrate the various fragments of their lives, activities and being (p.98). It is the function of the human mind that asks the big questions about meaning in life and what we are trying to achieve in life. Our SQ contributes to our growth as human beings in that it is our capacity to dream and aspire to higher ways of life and to probe deeper significance of things (p.99).

Zohar and Marshall argue that there is a particular part of the brain which is dedicated to the fundamental questions of existence, which forms ideals and which is active in spiritual experiences, a 'God spot' (Zohar and Marshall 2004, p.102). When people think about the most sacred aspects of life, activity in a particular part of the brain can be identified. Higher SQ is reflected in the higher types of motivation, the authors suggest.

Spiritual capital is achieved, then, when an individual operates on the basis of the highest levels of human motivation, reflecting high levels of SQ. It is evident in an organisation which acts out of a high set of values and motivations. The challenge is ultimately one of shifting organisational cultures. Zohar and Marshall argue that this must begin by addressing the motivations out of which an organisation operates, by changing behaviour, and ultimately by changing the culture itself to ensure the changes are preserved in the way the organisation functions.

## Part 2.

# Spirituality in the Workplace

### Evolving Concepts and Research

The writings on 'spiritual capital' have been preceded by a larger body of work about spirituality and the workplace. This work has also emphasised the importance of the meaningfulness of work and the relationships of employees with each other in the workplace.

Ashmos and Duchon (2000) argue that interest in spirituality in the workplace has grown in recent decades because of a range of factors. They note that the down-sizing and lay-offs of the 1990s and the growing inequity in wages in many parts of the Western world left workforces demoralised. At the same time, the workforce has increasingly become a primary source of community because of the decline of neighbourhoods, churches, civic groups and extended families as places of the main connection.

Another factor in the workplace which has contributed to the interest in spirituality has been the increased global competition and the drive for high levels of creativity. Some companies, Ashmos and Duchon say, have recognised that employee creativity emerges best when work is personally meaningful and where there is a personal commitment by employees to what they are doing.

Ashmos and Duchon also note the increased interest in a spirituality that is broader than that of the traditional religions. There has been an increased curiosity about Eastern philosophies and Pacific Rim cultures. People have been fascinated by the ideas of meditation and finding one's spiritual centre. As Baby Boomers move towards the close of life, Ashmos and Duchon suggest, one can only expect a growing interest in life's meaning. Similar factors have been identified by Marques, Dhiman and King (2005) who note that the increased numbers of women joining the workplace over recent decades may have increased interest in spirituality in the workplace. At the same time, there has been a movement towards more holistic living and a quest for a greater balance between work and other aspects of life.

Ashmos and Duchon argue that the development of spirituality in the workplace does not arise through ensuring employees accept a particular religion or belief system, but through building an environment in

which employees experience a sense of meaning and purpose in their work. Spirituality in the workplace is also about a sense of connectedness to others and to their workplace community. For Ashmos and Duchon, developing spirituality in the workplace is possible because all human beings have spirits and their spirits can be nurtured or damaged by their work. They define 'spirituality at work' as 'the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community'.

Their notion of spirituality has three components: the inner life, meaningful work and community. Based on such an understanding of spirituality, the spiritual capital of a workplace might be understood as the extent to which employees are finding their work meaningful in terms of connecting with human beings beyond the immediate workplace, and in terms of the extent to which they are experiencing a trusting community where they feel valued and supported. Similarly, Gracia-Zamor (2003) argues that the interest in spirituality in the workplace arises primarily because people want their work to be meaningful.

Another significant contribution to thinking about spirituality in the workplace comes from Mitroff and Denton (1999) *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America: A Hard Look at Spirituality, Religion and Values in the Workplace*. Using a notion of spirituality as 'the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others, and the entire universe' (1999, p.86), they undertook a qualitative empirical research project of managers and business executives. The results, they argue, show that companies that fostered a spiritual environment had employees who were more creative, loyal, productive, and adaptive to change than companies that stifled spirituality.

Burack (1999) has suggested that there are four major components to spirituality in the workplace. For each of these four components, there are various outcomes through which spirituality in the workplace might be evident.

1. Spirituality in the leadership and nature of an organisation would be demonstrated in concern for employees, respect for others, consistency of actions and demonstrated acumen.
2. Spirituality among employees would be demonstrated in conscientiousness in their work, the desire to build their skills and advance their knowledge, in their adaptability and in reaching for the highest level of performance.
3. Spirituality in the external qualities of the organisation would be shown in the quality of its products and services, its environmental awareness, and its sense of



responsibility as a community member.

4. Spirituality in the integrated nature of a workplace would result in mutual trust and shared responsibility in the desire for outcomes which benefit all parties.

Again, these components reflect concern for inter-relationships between people in the workplace and the extent to which the workplace operates in accord with ethical values, or in their terms, promotes activities that reflect a sense of community responsibility. What Burack adds to others is the importance of the conscientiousness of the employees and their pursuit of excellence as components of a spirituality. However, it is doubtful whether others would identify such characteristics as 'spiritual', even if they are seen as consequences of spirituality.

Marques, Dhiman and King (2005) have developed the following highly idealistic definition of spirituality in the workplace. Again, their definition stresses interconnectedness and the inner sense of spirituality, but sees these in the collective creativity of the organisation.

Spirituality in the workplace is an experience of interconnectedness, shared by all those involved in a work process, initially triggered by the awareness that each is individually driven by an inner power, which raises and maintains his or her sense of honesty, creativeness, proactivity, kindness, dependability, confidence, and courage; consequently leading to the collective creation of an aesthetically motivational environment characterized by a sense of purpose, high ethical standards, acceptance, peace, trust, respect, understanding, appreciation, care, involvement, helpfulness, encouragement, achievement, and perspective, thus establishing an atmosphere of enhanced team performance and overall harmony, and ultimately guiding the organization to become a leader in its industry and community, through its exudation of fairness, cooperativeness, vision, responsibility, charity, creativity, high productivity, and accomplishment.

The connectivity experience and effects of spirituality in the workplace accordingly reward each involved individual with the attainment of increased job satisfaction and self esteem (Marques, Dhiman and King 2005).

Some of the writing on spirituality in the workplace seems to use esoteric language for commonly recognised factors of cooperation and mutual support among employees. Is it really necessary for this to be 'triggered by the awareness that each is individually driver by an inner power', as Marques, Dhiman, and King suggest? On the other hand, the notions of

'spirituality in the workplace' and 'spiritual capital' are useful in drawing attention to the importance of the meaningfulness of work and to the possibility of work being related to human values and concern for human wellbeing.

## **The Development of Spirituality in the Workplace**

Having identified 'spirituality in the workplace' as a factor that enhances the experience of work and people's productivity, attention has turned to how this spirituality can be developed.

One program that has been designed for developing spirituality in the workplace is 'Spiritual Management Development' (SMD). This program has been described as 'encouraging subjects to search for meaning in their everyday working life through engagement with an inner self' (Bell and Taylor 2004). It usually involves taking people to remote locations and working through a range of challenging personal and team activities. This program builds on the psychology of Maslow and Fromm, as does the theory of Zohar and Marshall, but adds in some ideas of Jung and Assagioli. Maslow, for example, talks about self-actualising people who have a sense of vocation or calling. Workers find meaning in the work to which they feel they have been called. Ideally, work has this broader significance through its connections to the overall purpose of human existence. Fromm also argues that human beings find freedom and self-realisation by focussing beyond themselves to the wellbeing of the whole society.

There are two premises on which this 'spiritual management development' program is based. The first is that if an individual (manager) recognises his or her inner resources and sense of meaning, organisational performance will be increased. The second is that organisations can grow by capitalising on the inner resources and sense of meaning of the individuals, particularly the managers, within them. Underlying these premises is the notion of a holistic sense of the self and of wellbeing which involve physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions.

However, such programs have been criticised for their concentration on the inner resources of the individual and their failure 'to acknowledge the importance of organisational, social and political structures in defining individual potential' (Bell and Taylor 2004). By focussing on the inner resources of the individual in situations quite remote from the workplace, it fails to address the situation of the workplace itself. While it may provide some respite from the demands of the

workplace, it does not address the functioning of the organisation. It may assist the individual to question their own motivations but it does not begin to address the motivations or values on which the organisation itself is based.

While Zohar and Marshall do not advocate a particular program for building spirituality, they argue that such development will involve the development of SQ and moving up the ladder of motivations. They say that the change in motivation sometimes comes out of crisis, sometimes out of reflection, sometimes from glimpsing a vision – both at the organisational level and at the level of the employee. It can occur through dialogue in which motives and assumptions are challenged. Dialogue, they suggest, can encourage spontaneity, develop self-awareness, cause members to reframe their paradigms, and incite compassion (p.176).

## **Part 3.**

### **Discussion of the Use of the Term ‘Spiritual Capital’**

It has been noted that the term ‘spiritual capital’ has not been widely embraced. Part of the reason is that the term is new and is being used in a variety of ways which are not always consistent with each other. There are several other concerns that appear implicitly or explicitly in the literature and are considered below. One concern is whether employees look for spirituality or meaningfulness in their places of work. Most Australians find their primary sense of meaning in their families and among their friends. Many are not interested in spirituality at all. A second issue in the use of the term is the overlap between ‘spiritual capital’ and ‘social capital’ and what is distinctive in the use of ‘spiritual capital’. A third issue is whether the focus on ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual capital’ is a capitulation to Western individualistic and consumeristic culture that diverts attention from issues of social and structural justice.

#### **1. Are Employees Looking for ‘Spirituality’ in the Workplace?**

While there are certainly signs of a growing interest in spirituality in the workplace, some researchers suggest proceeding with caution. Not all work or workplaces relate well to what people consider to be ‘spirituality’. Many employees look for the expression of their spirituality outside work. Indeed, there may be some inherent difficulties and even contradictions in spiritual expressions and spiritual capital within some contemporary workplaces.

A study of nurses’ attitudes to spirituality demonstrated some of these difficulties. Nursing is one profession where it might be thought that spirituality would be an important dimension. In a study of 299 nurses in a hospital in the United States, 84 per cent acknowledged that there was a spiritual dimension in their caring. Quite a few of them also noted that they had experiences in their work which had a spiritual dimension, particularly in relationship to death. Yet, despite this, many of them (41%) felt that their work did not provide the opportunity to put their spiritual beliefs into practice. Only 10 per cent said that spiritual issues were often raised in official staff meetings. Some nurses did not want to pursue spiritual issues at depth in their work (Grant, O’Neil et al. 2004).

Grant, O’Neil et al. suggest that the bureaucratisation of the workplace and spirituality do not sit easily

beside each other. Most organisations work on a secular paradigm and spirituality appears primarily in the individuals' attitude and response to situations. People do not know, or are often forced to second-guess, what are the attitudes to spirituality and the paradigms out of which their colleagues and their clients are working. At the same time, the researchers suggest that the ways in which spirituality emerges in the workplace may be different from the ways it has been generally conceived. There is a possibility for spirituality to be seen as having an accepted place in secular bureaucracies if the theories of spirituality are broadly conceived (Grant, O'Neil et al. 2004).

The difficulties associated with using the term 'spiritual capital' may be greater in Australia than in the United States. There is evidence that many business people have quietly slipped out of the churches over the last few decades because notions of 'spirituality' and 'religion' were not felt to be compatible with the world of business. Spirituality is usually seen as 'non-material' and even as antithetical to what many businesses are about: the development of material goods. Spirituality is often seen as something abstract, even 'world-denying', while most businesses are about enhancing life in this world. Hence, spirituality is not readily seen as compatible with the culture of material consumption that is the *raison d'être* of many businesses and the major driver of the business economy (Hughes 2001).

Teaching is an area of work in which the human benefits are often readily apparent and education might be described as a field in which there are high levels of 'spiritual capital'. In 2008, the Christian Research Association conducted interviews with 60 teachers in Catholic schools. In these interviews, teachers were asked about why they were teaching in a Catholic secondary school and how they related to the Catholic ethos of the school. Notions of spirituality were discussed and how the teachers' own spirituality might be enhanced. Most teachers saw the human value in the work they did and appreciated the opportunity the school gave them to contribute to the lives of students, valuing each person in their own right. However, some were not comfortable when this was framed too tightly in religious terms and a few were not comfortable with this being seen as 'spiritual'. There were some teachers who said that teaching was a simply a job which gave financial benefits. For many, what gave life most meaning was their family and their friends, rather than their work.

Many people find the meaning of life more in their personal relationships, in home and in family, in friends and in their voluntary activities. Work is a means to an

end. It is a way of earning money which enables them to care for their families. Most Australians look for a balance in the time they spend in work and the time spent with family and other voluntary activities which contribute to their sense of meaning.

Recent research with young people has shown that they value work which is interesting and which offers high pay in a pleasant social environment. However, young people see work as a means to enjoy life rather than as integral to the enjoyment. They are keen that there is a balance in life and want work which will give them ample opportunities to enjoy leisure time and provide time for home and family. Few young people have a sense of vocation. In general, they do not look for work which will provide them with meaning or give them opportunities to fulfil their personal agendas for life although they want work that is interesting (Hughes 2007, p.44).

It is unlikely in most organisations in pluralistic Western societies that all the employees will share the same sense of meaningfulness, or the same framework of beliefs and values out of which that sense of meaningfulness is constructed. While many organisations seek employees who understand and accept the ethos of their organisation, employees will not necessarily fully identify with that ethos at a personal level.

Any attempt by an organisation to foist on its employees a particular sense of meaningfulness may backfire. It could lead to a decline in commitment rather than a gain if the framework and notion of 'meaning in life' that the organisation advocates is not in line with that of the employee.

Hence, it must be recognised by organisations that some of the 'meaningfulness' will occur in a contractual way, through mutual benefits such as pay for work rather than through a harmony of goals and meaning. People will be involved in an organisation because they are paid for their work and this pay contributes to their meaningfulness in enabling them to provide for their families or to travel, or engage in whatever other activities give them meaning.

The term 'spirituality' is particularly problematic for many Australians. In the Wellbeing and Security Survey (2002) conducted by Edith Cowan University, Anglicare (Sydney) and NCLS Research, 1509 Australians chosen randomly in the adult population were asked to rate the extent to which they saw themselves as 'spiritual people' on a scale of 1 to 10. Twenty per cent of the respondents scored themselves as '1': not spiritual at all. A total of 53 per cent scored

themselves less than 5 out of 10. Even if they do consider themselves to be spiritual, it is not generally an important dimension of their lives. That survey also found the level of interest in spirituality was lower among younger people, and highest among those in their 60s (Hughes, Kaldor and Black, forthcoming).

On the other hand, new terminology can be used to introduce new ideas and to change the ways that people think. It is possible that the term 'spiritual capital' could be used to raise the importance of the meaningfulness of work for employees. It points to the importance of the ethical operations of organisations and of motivating employees through the meaning that they find in their contributions to the organisation.

## 2. How Does 'Spiritual Capital' Relate to 'Social Capital'?

It has been noted that one of the foci for 'spirituality in the workplace' has been the relationships between workers. The term 'spiritual capital' has sometimes been used to refer, partly, to the extent that there is an 'interrelatedness' between the employees and mutual respect between employers, managers and employees in an organisation.

It is certainly true within every workplace that where there is mutual trust, harmony in communication and a willingness to help each other out, the workplace runs more efficiently. There are times when this sense of harmony is related to a strong sense of common purpose and common objectives that the workers are seeking to attain.

The term 'social capital' has been frequently used in recent literature to refer to the quantity and quality of the relationships within a workplace or within a community. An organisation in which the employees know each other well, communicate well with each other, trust each other and cooperate effectively has frequently been characterised as an organisation with high levels of 'social capital'. The relationships of respect and trust between management and workers also contribute to the social capital of an organisation. The term 'social capital' would seem to be more appropriate than 'spiritual capital' for referring to the social relationships in a workplace or community.

'Spiritual capital' draws attention to the types of motivations which the members of an organisation may share. If the members are focussed on contributing to the wellbeing of others rather than on earning an income for themselves, then it may be considered the organisation has higher levels of 'spiritual capital'.

It may be that 'spiritual capital' may contribute to 'social capital' by providing that common motivation. However, it would seem that it would be more appropriate to refer to relationships in the workplace in terms of 'social capital' rather than as 'spiritual capital'.

## 3. Is 'Spirituality' an Individualistic Term That 'Hides' Corporate Realities?

In their book, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*, Carrette and King have written an extended and comprehensive critique of the notion of 'spirituality' which is also relevant to the notion of spiritual capital. They argue that contemporary notions of spirituality are individualistic and consumeristic and that it is a product of capitalist ways of looking at the world, developed so as to ensure that capitalism is not criticised.

Carrette and King trace the development of individualism to the rise of psychology. They criticise the development of psychological ways of looking at the world for creating a privatised and individualised conception of reality (Carrette and King 2005, chapter 2). Psychology has focussed attention on the individual self as a distinct unit or even a 'closed system' (p.60). Under its influence, they argue, religion has become psychologised and the focus of religion has become 'religious experiences'. Maslow comes under special scrutiny.

[Maslow's] ideas of 'self-actualisation', 'peak-experience', 'Being-cognition' and 'transpersonal psychology' have all played a key part in the creation of capitalist spiritualities. His language facilitated a clear break of 'spirituality' from its institutional moorings, and opened the space for spirituality to be seen as a 'secular' rather than an especially 'religious' phenomena (p.75).

They argue that the notion of spirituality, as one that is rooted in the psychology of the individual, has involved a hijacking of religion. 'God is dead but has been resurrected as capital' they quip (Carrette and King, 2005, p.1). Religion has been made into a commodity called 'spirituality' which can be possessed by individuals. In so doing, capitalism has removed those elements of religion which had the potential to critique it: the religious emphases on social justice in the structures of organisations and communities. In this notion of spirituality they see a loss of the ethic of unreserved compassion for others.

Carrette and King note that there has been a long

history of interaction between religion and business. For several hundred years, religion has existed as a reforming element in relation to business. It has encouraged employers to be honest and to care for the needs of their employees, for example (Carrette and King 2005, p.18). However, they note the recent rise of forms of religion and capitalistic spiritualities that actively embrace capitalism, consumerism and individualism in which the element of cultural critique has been suppressed (Carrette and King 2005, pp.19-21). They refer briefly to examples of this in the Catholic movement Opus Dei and some forms of neo-Pentecostalism. One of the prime examples in the Australian scene is the development of the 'prosperity doctrine' advocated by some Pentecostal churches in which it is argued that God blesses people by advancing their businesses and making them wealthy.

Carrette and King advocate the total rejection of the notion of 'spirituality' because of its implicit individualism and its lack of a communal ethic in which the issues of social justice in relation to social structures are recognised. While such a total rejection may be an over-statement, Carrette and King offer some important reminders to those who embrace the language of spirituality either generally or in relation to the workplace. They remind us that the development of a good workplace is not just a matter of addressing the motivations of the workers, but involves creating a socially just organisation. Indeed, attention may be diverted from socially unjust practices in a workplace by the focus on employee motivations and the demands for loyalty in the name of spirituality in the workplace (Carrette and King 2005, pp.130-131).

The same critique that applies to spirituality in the workplace also applies to spirituality in the community. As Carrette and King argue, 'spirituality' is generally seen as an individual pursuit. While there is much in the literature about the enhancement of spirituality leading to an enhancement of people's sensitivities to others, there is little in spirituality that leads to the formation of communities which act on issues of social justice. Indeed, the focus on spirituality may distract people from communal issues, from the task of building a more just and cooperative community.

A similar criticism of 'spirituality' can be made of the term 'capital' in the context of 'spiritual capital'. It could be argued that 'spiritual capital' implies that 'spirituality' is something that can be measured, possessed and accumulated. A similar point has been made in relation to 'social capital' where it is argued that 'capital' is an economic term which is being used to describe something that is not economic (Fine 2001; Harriss 2002). To talk about 'social capital' and

'spiritual capital' suggests that social relationships and spiritual motivations can be measured in financial terms. The danger is that these 'capitals' may also be regarded as 'commodities', as characteristics of a community or organisation which can be purchased or sold.

On the other hand, it can be argued that the use of these terms has the potential to change the economic picture. By relating to the economic way of thinking, the use of 'capitals' encourages the economists and the wider society to think more broadly about how communities and organisations are evaluated. In giving an account of a community or organisation, it is not sufficient to look only at the financial turnover. The 'turnover' in terms of human skills and capacities, in terms of the social relationships between people, and in their motivations and sense of meaning must also be taken into consideration.

There is a danger in the use of the term 'spiritual capital' that it could focus attention on the motivations of employees in such a way as to divert attention from problems of structural inequality in the workplace. It is possible, for example, that employers could make the 'meaningfulness of the work' the basis of a loyalty which turns a blind eye to poor conditions in the workplace or poor remuneration for work. It could be argued that some religious and charitable organisations have done exactly that. They have traded the commitment of their employees to the meaningfulness of the work for low pay and poor conditions of work. Other organisations may work on the employees' sense of loyalty to the company through the development of a vision of the meaningfulness of work in order that the inequality of wages paid to top management and to the workers themselves is over-looked. In other words, it is possible that attention to 'spiritual capital' could be used to hide unethical practices in the workplace.

This is one example of the sort of issues that Carrette and King claim are inherent in the use of the term 'spirituality'. Spirituality focuses on the individual, and particularly on the inner states of individuals: their motivations, values and sense of meaning. In so doing, it takes attention away from the social structural issues of society. It weakens the sense of social justice. Spirituality lacks the communal dimension that is inherent in religion and lacks the sense of ethics as applied to the communal dimension.

One does not need to accept the thesis of Carrette and King, that the contemporary notion of 'spirituality' is a creation of a capitalist culture which takes out of religion that which has inherent potential to critique capitalism, to recognise that notions of religion and

spirituality are bound to be shaped by the predominant culture in which they are expressed. Hence, notions of religion and spirituality are bound to be used in ways that are favourable to that predominant culture. Religion has certainly been used at times and in places throughout history as an ‘opiate of the masses’, or as means of oppressing people, just as Carrette and King argue is the case with the term ‘spirituality’ in a capitalist world. But the fact that religion has been used in this way does not mean that religion is always an opiate used in processes of oppression.

While the ways notions of spirituality are used may sometimes reflect the individualistic and consumeristic nature of Western culture, contemporary ‘spirituality’ cannot be reduced to individualism and consumerism. The notion of spirituality has deep roots in religions and in other aspects of human experience and calls attention to a way of life in which both inner peace and compassion for others are valued. Indeed, in the minds of Zohar and Marshall, it represents a real alternative to the capitalist focus on the accumulation of financial capital: a wealth for which it is truly worth living.

## Part 4. Conclusions

The term ‘spiritual capital’ is currently being used in some very different ways. In some places, it is used to describe the accumulation of knowledge, habits and understanding about religion or spirituality. In other places it is used to refer to the search for meaning and community. This latter use has wider application and is more relevant to the workplace.

The most valuable function of the term ‘spiritual capital’ is to draw attention to the importance of the meaningfulness of work or of life in a community. The term may be used to refer to the extent to which organisations or communities have on-going activities and long-term goals that are meaningful in terms of contributing in significant ways to the wellbeing of people’s lives or the wellbeing of society. At the heart of an organisation’s activities and goals, the motivations which drive an organisation or community may be recognised. These goals may be seen as ethical in that they relate positively to the wellbeing of human beings.

As suggested by Zohar and Marshall, organisations and communities might be driven by various motivations. The meaningfulness of their activities is identifiable as the higher motivations of contributing to people’s wellbeing are evident in their activities. Employees may find meaningfulness in their work or in community as they identify with those motivations and contribute to achieving those goals.

It has been noted that this sense of meaningfulness relating the work of an organisation to a larger scheme of things is more easily developed in some organisations than in others. Schools are concerned with enhancing the wellbeing of children through the processes of education. Lawyers may see their activities as contributing to a more just and fair society. Architects may see themselves as contributing to people’s enjoyment of their homes, the aesthetic nature of a city and to a sustainable future. Spiritual capital is diminished when the organisation is focussed more on making a profit or serving its own interests in other ways than on serving the wellbeing of its clients.

Most people seek meaning and purpose in their lives. They do this as they relate what happens on a day to day basis with large purposes. For some people, religion provides a framework for understanding life and the world. One can find meaning by placing oneself within that overall framework. By relating one’s own activities to the purposes of God, for example, one

places one's own activities in an all-encompassing framework and identifies meaning in those activities by doing so.

When work is related to that sense of the overall meaning of creation and of life, then it becomes a vocation. That sense of meaning can add passion to one's activities. It can energise and give direction to them. One might describe as 'spiritual capital', the extent to which people are finding their own sense of meaning fulfilled in the activities of an organisation. Where there is a strong sense of meaningfulness in the values and motivations of an organisation and employees identify with that sense of meaningfulness for their own lives, so 'spiritual capital' is maximised.

Nevertheless, employees come to their employment with many different frameworks of thinking. Many see the meaning in their lives primarily in their families or in their leisure activities. Work, for them, is seen as a means through which they can provide for their families or provides the resources for engaging in those activities that really interest them. Many people are keen to find work which will give them not only financial resources for other pursuits but also the time in which those other activities may be enjoyed. The meaningfulness of the work is not a great concern at all for these people.

It has been noted that the term 'spirituality' is embraced by only half the population of Australia as something that is important. Many Australians do not see themselves as spiritual people and would not be interested if an organisation was commended as having high levels of 'spiritual capital'. Spirituality has overtones of the 'non-material' world and does not embrace the breadth of human life that is captured by 'wellbeing' and 'happiness', for example. As such the term 'spiritual capital' does not connote the wide range of ways in which participation in organisations or communities may be found meaningful.

We have also noted that there is the potential for spirituality to be seen as something quite individualistic. 'Spirituality' has sometimes been commended as something that individuals can pursue in a very personal way without involvement in communities. As Carrette and King have pointed out, there is certainly the possibility that a focus on the inner dimensions of spirituality may become, intentionally or unintentionally, a distraction from the demands of social justice. There is the potential that a focus on spirituality in the workplace could be used to avoid attention to organisational problems or injustices.

As Carrette and King demonstrate, there are many occasions when spirituality is shaped by the individualistic and consumeristic culture that dominates the Western world. At times, spirituality becomes so captivated by that culture that it fails to retain its ability to critique it.

Yet, within the realms of religion and spirituality, there remain traditions that transcend any particular culture. The terms discussed in this paper do have the capacity to draw attention to dimensions of life that transcend the culture in which they are being used. The notion of spiritual capital may have some value in drawing attention to the possibility of meaningful work and community involvement. It may have value in taking some attention away from a fixation on the economic capital of an organisation or community. As Zohar and Marshall (2004, ch. 1) claim, the use of the term 'spiritual capital' may even awaken the realisation that there is more to life than its economic dimension and provide an alternative to capitalism as a 'wealth we can live by'.

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