

# Spirituality and Religion in the Workplace: History, Theory, and Research

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The role of spirituality and religion in the workplace (SRW) is a relatively new area of inquiry that has emerged from scholarly fields not typically associated with the study of the psychology of religion and spirituality. This article explores the underlying assumptions and history as well as the state of current theory and empirical research regarding SRW. We first describe the history of the efforts to integrate spirituality and religion into the workplace, with their foundational roots in the Protestant Work Ethic and their emergence through the Faith at Work movement. Next we review the major theoretical developments in this area that have established a domain of relevant definitions, constructs, frameworks, and models. Then we review the empirical research on spirituality in the workplace and conclude that 2 major streams have emerged that have, to date, discovered similar findings in regard to their significant impact on relevant individual and organizational outcomes. Finally, we explore particular challenges associated with integrative work and future theory building and research.

*Keywords:* spirituality, religion, workplace spirituality, spiritual leadership

Our relationship to work is an integral part of our self-concept, greatly affecting not only the quality of our lives in the workplace but also at home. Interest in spirituality and religion in the workplace (SRW) has emerged over the last few decades (Bell & Taylor, 2004; Carroll, 2013; Driver, 2005; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Fry, 2003, 2005a; Fry & Kriger, 2009; Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013; Hicks, 2003; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; Lips-Wiersma, 2003; Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2002; Dean, Fornaciari, & McGee, 2003; Tischler, 1999), gaining the interest of both scholars and practitioners (Carroll, 2013; Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013; Hicks, 2003; Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2004; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). Scholars have linked SRW to a wide variety of organizational functions and practices, although the major emphasis so far has been on the positive impact of SRW on organizational reality (Benefiel, 2003, 2005, 2008; Hall, Oates, Anderson, & Willingham, 2012; Neal & Biberman, 2004; Wong & Hu, 2012), management processes (Dean & Safranski, 2008; Lewis & Geroy, 2000; McCormick, 1994; Steingard, 2005), and leadership practices (Chen & Yang, 2012; Chen, Yang, & Li, 2012; Fry, 2005b; Reave, 2005). Why this interest in SRW has recently emerged is a matter of debate (see Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010, for a full review). The most viable arguments have claimed that society seeks spiritual solutions to ease tumultuous social and business changes (e.g., Mitroff & Denton, 1999); that profound change in values globally has brought a growing social consciousness and spiritual renaissance (e.g., Aburdene, 2005; Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013); and that growing interest in Eastern philosophies has resurfaced spiritual yearnings overall (Goldman Schulyer, 2012;

Marques, 2010). Whatever the reasons, the increased attention directed toward SRW issues is undeniable.

Some have argued that SRW provides answers to complicated contemporary problems resulting from major organizational changes, for example, downsizing, reengineering, and layoffs (Driver, 2005; Fry & Slocum, 2008; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008; Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2004). The distrust and diminished view of work that have arisen from these organizational changes have made employees see themselves as expendable resources (Cohen, 1996) and compelled them to seek a deeper meaning and connection in life and, consequently, integrate a spiritual–work identity (Ali & Falcone, 1995). Some have argued that these changes, which have resulted in the demoralization and the spiritual disorientation of the employees (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2004; Leigh, 1997), can be counterbalanced by the positive impact of SRW (Driver, 2005; Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2004; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2012).

Additionally, there is the need to reduce employee cynicism and mistrust by recognizing the potential for meaning and sense of community inherent in work (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Fagley & Adler, 2012). Because employees have spent an increasing amount of time at work, they have actively pursued opportunities for meaningful experiences in the workplace (Neck & Milliman, 1994). Indeed, some employees have even expected their employers to provide for such a spiritual search (Konz & Ryan, 1999). In addition to the number of work hours required for employees, the unstable work environment has increased distrust in organizations (Fry & Coen, 2009).

Many in the field have perceived SRW as providing the impetus, the necessary driving force, toward more meaningful work experiences (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008). Moreover, they have expected SRW to contribute to a better, deeper, and more meaningful understanding of human work and organizational reality. To be more specific, the literature has generally treated SRW as the missing attribute of both organizational life and organizational

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effectiveness (Fry & Slocum, 2008; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003), in the absence of which an understanding of corporate reality remains limited and incomplete. For example, Fry (2003) has argued that the recent, rapid organizational changes inherent in the 21st century global, Internet age have rendered obsolete the traditional bureaucratic paradigm that has dominated the organizational scene since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Due to these changes, he called for a radical transformation to a learning organizational paradigm based on SRW and spiritual leadership. Fry and Slocum (2008) argued that one of the greatest challenges facing leaders today is the need to develop new business models that accentuate SRW, spiritual leadership, employee well-being, sustainability, and social responsibility without sacrificing profitability, revenue growth, and other indicators of financial performance (the so-called triple bottom line, or “People, Planet, Profit”).

The purpose of this article is to systematically explore the underlying assumptions and rationale of the main trends of SRW as well as to offer an overview of the field and a recommendation for its future development. We first briefly describe the history of the efforts to integrate spirituality and religion into the workplace. Next, we provide a review of the recent literature on SRW, highlighting the major theoretical and empirical work in this arena to date. Then, we examine particular challenges associated with integrative work and future research in SRW and, finally, offer suggestions for future theory building and research.

### An Overview of the History of SRW

In the sixth century St. Benedict (c. 480–543) wrote his rules for monastic life, emphasizing the integration of work and prayer. For Benedict, work and prayer complemented one another in the daily discipline of spiritual formation on the path to holiness. Benedict viewed the work that comprised most hours of the monks’ day as just as holy as the regular hours of prayer that punctuated the work, because both provided discipline for body and soul and served a good end. Benedict’s teachings influenced the Christian West, both in the monastic and in the lay understandings of the holiness of labor.

During the Reformation, Martin Luther reaffirmed the holiness of ordinary, daily work performed by lay people, which he felt had been devalued by the Church’s gradual elevation of monastic life over the life of the laity through the medieval period. Luther claimed that all people, whatever their calling, should “seek perfection” in their work, attaining holiness through the discipline of working faithfully.

### The Protestant Work Ethic

During the Industrial Revolution, Protestants developed a work ethic that aimed to spiritualize the workplace. Through the concept of a “calling,” the Protestant Work Ethic held people responsible for doing their best in their worldly stations rather than disengaging from the world in a quest for perfection (Buchholz & Rosenthal, 2003). Although the ethic gave meaning to work and the workplace, it carried a pessimistic view of humankind (Mobley, 1971), in which humans are basically sinful and must deny themselves earthly pleasures to avoid hell and reach heaven. The Industrial Revolution reinforced the Protestant views by extolling

objectivity and displacing the focus on free will (Mason, 2003). Both theology and science viewed the universe, humans included, as stable and materialistic in nature (Mobley, 1971).

These assumptions influenced ideas about management and work. The scientific concept of “cause and effect” suggests that the past predicts the future, social structures need hierarchy, and a supreme controlling agent must be in power. Therefore, classical management theory, rooted in the Protestant Work Ethic, asserts the need to exercise autocratic rule and power, thereby minimizing employee conflict and resistance to work. The problem is that humans do not conform to this kind of universe. Unpredictable and endowed with free will, they possess imagination, hope, faith, ambitions, creativity, and the capacity for growth.

The Protestant Work Ethic restricted consumption, suggesting that one should not lavishly consume wealth but, rather, invest it for greater individual and societal well-being. However, these well-intentioned values resulted in the production of economic wealth as an end in itself, severed from any moral principles that could enrich human existence. Consequently, whatever constraint the Protestant Work Ethic may have provided has disappeared in the ever-increasing demand for a consumer culture with products and services geared to produce pleasure and instant self-gratification. Not only production but also consumption has become an end in itself, divorced from moral purpose (Buchholz & Rosenthal, 2003; Fry, 2005b).

### The Faith at Work Movement

The antecedents of today’s emphasis on SRW reach back to the late 19th century in Europe and the United States. The Faith at Work movement arose during this period in response to a perceived lack of interest on the part of the Church toward lay people’s experiences in the secular workplace. Faith at Work scholar David Miller (2007) organized the movement into three eras. The first, the Social Gospel era (c. 1890s–1945), arose when Walter Rauschenbusch, a Protestant clergyman, and Bruce Barton, a Protestant advertising executive, each rediscovered the relevance of the gospel to issues of work and society (Rauschenbusch, 1912). Rauschenbusch articulated the Social Gospel, calling Christians to address both personal and societal transformation by entering the business realm and transforming it from the inside. In 1924, Barton wrote the bestseller, *The Man Nobody Knows* (Barton, 1924), which focused on Jesus as a role model for business leaders. In 1891, at about the same time that Rauschenbusch began writing, Pope Leo XIII issued his social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (*The Condition of Labor*; [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15051891\\_rerum-novarum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html)), echoing similar themes for Catholics.

Diminishing during the two world wars and the Great Depression between them, the Faith at Work movement found new life in the Ministry of the Laity era (1946–1985), Miller’s (2007) second era. Among Protestants of the time, a burst of ecumenical activity after World War II focused on the laity and their work in the world. This movement joined with special-purpose groups focused on the ministry of the laity, such as International Christian Leadership, Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship International, the Audenshaw Foundation, and the Coalition for Ministry in Daily Life, to revitalize the Faith at Work spirit. Among Catholics, the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) affirmed the laity’s work in the

world as equally important as the clergy's work in the Church. In Miller's (2007) third era, (1986–present), the prevailing economic conditions of constant change led to a quest for integration of faith and work. No longer content to park their souls at the door, people sought to bring their whole selves—body, mind, heart, and soul—to work.

The Faith at Work movement emphasized the importance of religion, its potential value for business and society, and offered compelling new arguments for the depth and breadth of spirituality at work. The integration of faith and work has had positive implications at the personal level, as well as for corporate ethics and the broader economic sphere. The study of religion has often investigated beliefs, rituals, and practices, and how they have manifested in various spheres of life. For many, faith is what shapes and informs their value system, ethics, character, leadership, and attitude toward work. Research has shown that most students, workers, marketplace professionals, and leaders want to live a holistic life that integrates, among other things, faith and work, but have few resources to help them do that (Miller & Ewest, 2013).

At the same time, increasing expressions of religion and spiritual practices at work have presented the threat of divisiveness and discrimination. Miller (2007) documented the surprising abdication of this field by the Church and theological academy and its embrace, ironically, by the management academy. Concluding that Faith at Work is a bona fide social movement, here to stay, Miller established the importance of the movement, identified the possibilities and problems, and pointed toward future research questions.

Overlapping chronologically with, but often distinct in content from, Miller's Faith at Work era, the 1990s saw the publication of books and articles in the popular press, primarily on spirituality (for the first time *sans* religion) in the workplace, and the first academic interest in SRW. Bestselling books like Bolman and Deal's *Leading with Soul* (1995) and Jaworski's *Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership* (1996) blazed the trail. Marc Gunther's (2001) lead article in *Fortune*, "God and Business," built on the groundswell of interest in the nineties, highlighting six "spiritual" business leaders from a variety of religious backgrounds.

### SRW Theoretical Development

Mitroff and Denton (1999), in *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America*, offered the first large-scale empirical study of the SRW phenomenon. Concluding that most organizations suffer from spiritual impoverishment, the authors offered models that can be adopted to promote spirituality in organizations in order to implement and practice SRW without inducing acrimony, conflict, controversy, and division over fundamental beliefs and values. Like many writers of popular literature in the nineties, Mitroff and Denton separated spirituality from religion, advocating for spirituality in the workplace and arguing against religious expression in that sphere. As the concept of spirituality in the workplace gained strength and interest, the Academy of Management created a new special interest group for its members in 2000. The *Management, Spirituality, and Religion* interest group currently works to legitimize the study of SRW in the workplace while simultaneously

paving the way to integrate this emerging concept into the leadership arena.

Although SRW has been an ambiguous term, scholars have brought increasing clarity to the definition. Duchon and Plowman (2005) defined SRW in terms of its components: (a) a recognition that employees have an inner life; (b) an assumption that employees desire to find work meaningful; and (c) a commitment by the company to serve as a context or community for spiritual growth. SRW has also incorporated the dimensions of the spiritual well-being construct, in which one feels a sense of purpose and direction (Paloutzian, Emmons, & Keortge, 2003).

Other scholars have suggested that SRW can be cultivated to increase organizational performance. Reder (1982) found that spirituality-based organizational cultures were the most productive, and through maximizing productivity they reached dominance in the marketplace. In addition, emerging evidence has suggested that spiritually healthy workplaces have performed better (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Elm, 2003; Fry et al., 2011; Garcia-Zamor, 2003).

In 2003, Douglas Hicks published *Religion and the Workplace* (Hicks, 2003), which analyzes the writings and issues that had surfaced in the SRW literature by that time. Hicks agreed with those who claimed that employees should not be asked to park their souls at the door. At the same time, he argued that efforts to decouple SRW were naïve and ineffective, and proposed an alternative way to integrate spirituality, religion, and work: "respectful pluralism." Hicks claimed that effective leaders should create an environment for employees to express their own faiths and respect one another's faiths.

Also in 2003, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz edited the *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance* (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003), the largest collection of essays up to that point, arguing for the necessity of linking SRW to organizational performance, integrating psychology, spirituality, and organizational science. Like Mitroff and Denton, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz argued that integrating spirituality and work would improve organizational performance. They defined workplace spirituality as:

A framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected in a way that provides feelings of compassion and joy. (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003, p. 13)

This sense of transcendence, of having a calling through one's work or being called (vocationally), and a need for social connection or membership are seen as necessary for providing the foundation for any theory of SRW. SRW must therefore be comprehended within a holistic context of interwoven cultural and personal values. Also, to be of benefit to leaders and their organizations, any definition of SRW must demonstrate its utility by impacting performance, turnover, productivity, and other relevant effectiveness criteria (Sass, 2000).

In 2005, a special issue of *The Leadership Quarterly* addressed theoretical, practical, and empirical issues in SRW as they relate to leadership. From this issue, a theme comprised of two universal spiritual needs emerged (Fry, 2005a): that what is required for SRW is an *inner life* that nourishes and is nourished by *calling or transcendence of self* within the context of a *community* based on

the values of altruistic love. Satisfying these spiritual needs in the workplace positively influences health and psychological well-being and forms the foundation for SRW. Benefiel's (2005) article in that issue focused on the epistemological challenges that arise when melding social scientific studies with philosophical/theological studies, and proposed an integrative approach as a way forward.

In 2008, Biberman and Tischler edited *Spirituality in Business: Theory, Practice, and Future Directions* (Biberman & Tischler, 2008), summarizing the various integrative approaches in the SRW field to date, such as: founding SRW on religiously inspired compassion, drawing on appreciative inquiry, using "intentional intelligence," employing meditation, and integrating aspects of spiritual leadership (Biberman & Tischler, 2008; Heaton & Schmidt-Wilk, 2008). Drawing on the definition of SRW that Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) offered above, the authors attempted to summarize and organize existing research in the area of spirituality and work using a three-dimensional model based on the level of analysis, type of measures, and validity.

Hill, Jurkiewicz, Giacalone, and Fry (2013) noted that SRW in the organizational sciences emerged from a very different mindset than one would have expected. Organizational behavior, for example, borrowed heavily from psychology and sociology in its early development. Similarly conjoined, the field of human resource management developed a symbiotic relationship with industrial psychology. Contrary to what many may have expected, SRW did not emerge from research on the psychology of religion. For example, Emmons and Paloutzian (2003), in their discussion of the rapid growth and progress in the psychology of religion over the last 25 years, failed to even mention SRW. More recently, as Carroll (2013), citing Hall and Chandler (2005) and Dik and Duffy (2009), has pointed out, "psychologists have begun to examine the concept of *calling* in studies of religion and spirituality in the workplace" (Carroll, 2013, p. 599). Carroll (2013) himself "extended studies of calling to other work-related outcomes" (p. 600), connecting sanctification of work to job satisfaction, turnover, and organizational commitment. Oates, Hall, and Anderson (2005) and Oates (2008) discovered a connection between spirituality and the ability to cope with the stress of dual roles. Although the research may now sometimes parallel or intersect, the field of SRW was born of organizational and social psychology, ethics, and management.

The disconnection between these fields has occurred primarily because the psychology of religion, particularly over the past 30 years, has been characterized by empirical research, while the study of SRW emerged through theoretical advocacy and organizational case study rather than by data sets compiled from individual respondents. Thus, the concept of SRW emerged from recognition and documentation of the phenomenon, and an articulated need for formalized study to address this salient aspect of organizational life. The stream of research that has arisen from this ontological tradition (see Biberman & Whitty, 1997) has led to important emerging issues regarding SRW in the social sciences that will be discussed in more detail in the section "Challenges Associated With Integrative Work and Future Research in SRW" (Fairholm, 1997; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Hill et al., 2013; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Neal, 2001).

## Spiritual Leadership Theory

Having received increased attention in the organizational sciences, SRW is a fast growing area of research and inquiry, with important implications for leadership theory, research, and practice (Hill et al., 2013). To date, the most developed and tested theory of SRW is the model of spiritual leadership proposed by Fry (2003, 2005b, 2008), Fry and Nisiewicz (2013), and Fry, Matherly, and Ouimet (2010). Fry's (2003) initial model of spiritual leadership was developed within an intrinsic motivation framework that incorporated spiritual leadership (i.e., vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love) and spiritual well-being (i.e., calling and membership). The purpose of spiritual leadership is to create vision and value congruence across the strategic, empowered team and individual levels. Ultimately, it should foster higher levels of important individual and organizational outcomes such as organizational commitment and productivity, financial performance, employee life satisfaction, and corporate social responsibility (Fry et al., 2010; Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013).

Essential to spiritual leadership are the key processes of:

1. Creating a transcendent vision of service to others whereby one experiences a sense of calling so that one's life has purpose and meaning and makes a difference.
2. Establishing or reinforcing an organizational culture based on the values of altruistic love whereby one has a sense of membership, feels understood and appreciated, and has genuine care, concern, and appreciation for *both* self and others.

Fry (2005b) extended spiritual leadership theory by exploring developments in SRW, character ethics, positive psychology, and spiritual leadership. He argued that these areas provide a consensus on the values, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for health, psychological and ethical well-being, and, ultimately, corporate social responsibility.

Fry (2008) further revised the spiritual leadership model to include inner life and life satisfaction. One's inner life, or spiritual practice, as a fundamental source of inspiration and insight, positively influences development of (a) hope/faith in a transcendent vision of service to key stakeholders and (b) the values of altruistic love. Inner life affects individuals' perceptions about who they are, what they are doing, and what they are contributing (Vail, 1998). It includes individual practices (e.g., meditation, prayer, religious practices, yoga, journaling, walking in nature) and organizational contexts (e.g., rooms for inner silence and reflection) to help individuals become more self-aware and conscious from moment-to-moment and draw strength from their beliefs, whether they include a nondual being, higher power, God, or philosophical teachings (Fry & Kriger, 2009; Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013).

## Summary of SRW Theory Development to Date

There is an emerging theoretical consensus that both leaders and followers who have an inner life or spiritual practice will be more likely to have, or want to develop, hope/faith in a transcendent vision of service to key stakeholders and the other-centered values of altruistic love. To implement SRW, spiritual leaders model the values of altruistic love through their attitudes and behaviors,

while jointly developing a common vision with followers. Subsequently, both leaders and followers experience higher levels of spiritual well-being through calling, which gives one a sense that his/her life has meaning and purpose, and membership, which gives one a sense that one is understood and appreciated. Thus, the main proposition that has emerged for testing is that organizations that implement SRW and spiritual leadership have higher levels of spiritual well-being through calling and membership, which then positively influences important employee, organizational, and societal outcomes (Biberman & Tischler, 2008; Fry et al., 2010; Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013; Hill et al., 2013).

### SRW Empirical Research

This section reviews the empirical research on SRW to date. Although there are many studies in the extant literature on SRW, only those that performed and reported adequate tests of the reliability and validity of their measure are reported here. They include statistical procedures such as coefficient alpha reliabilities, confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation modeling, and hierarchical linear regression. Studies that reported simple corre-

lational relationships were also excluded. To date, measures of SRW have been developed for testing Ashmos and Duchon's (2000) spirituality at work construct and Fry's (2003) model of spiritual leadership. In addition, others have developed measures that met the criteria for inclusion in this study (Kolodinsky, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2008; Ming-Chia, 2012; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2012). These studies, along with a summary of reported statistically significant relationships ( $p < .05$ ), are given in Table 1.

### Empirical Studies Based on the Ashmos and Duchon (2000) SRW Measure

Duchon and Plowman (2005) explored the relationship between work unit spirituality and performance in a study of six work units in a large hospital system. Using nonparametric procedures, the results suggested that there is a positive relationship between work unit spirituality and work unit performance. Milliman et al. (2003) studied the association between spirituality in the workplace and employee work attitudes. Using the measure developed by Ashmos and Duchon (2000), they found positive relationships between

Table 1  
*Summary of Empirical Studies of Spirituality and Religion in the Workplace*

Author	Definition/instrument used	Results
Bodia & Ali (2012)	Fry et al. (2005)	+ Commitment + Unit productivity + Job satisfaction
Chen & Yang (2012)	Fry et al. (2005)	+ Altruism + Conscientiousness
Chen, Yang, & Li (2012)	Fry et al. (2005)	+ Self-career management + Unit productivity
Duchon & Plowman (2005) Fry & Slocum (2008)	Ashmos & Duchon (2000) Fry et al. (2005)	+ Work unit performance + Commitment + Productivity + Sales growth
Fry, Hannah, Noel, & Walumbwa (2011)	Fry et al. (2005)	+ Commitment + Productivity + Work unit performance
Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo (2005)	Fry et al. (2005)	+ Commitment + Unit productivity
Hall, Oates, Anderson, & Willingham (2012)	Mahoney et al. (2005)	+ Job satisfaction – Interrole conflict
Javanmard (2012)	Fry et al. (2005); Duchon & Plowman (2005)	+ Work performance
Kolodinsky, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz (2008)	Wheat (1991)	+ Involvement + Identification + Job satisfaction – Frustration
Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson (2003)	Ashmos & Duchon (2000)	+ Commitment + Satisfaction + Retention + Job involvement + Organizational citizenship behavior
Ming-Chia (2012)	Researcher designed	– Earnings management (manipulation)
Pawar (2009)	Ashmos & Duchon (2000); Duchon & Plowman (2005)	+ Commitment + Satisfaction + Job involvement
Petchsawang & Duchon (2012) Rego, Cunha, & Souto (2008)	Researcher designed Ashmos & Duchon (2000); Milliman et al. (2003)	+ Work performance + Attachment + Loyalty – Instrumental commitment

dimensions of meaningful work, sense of community, alignment of values and organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, and involvement and intention to quit. Pawar (2009) used a modified version of the instrument developed by Ashmos and Duchon (2000) and found SRW to be positively associated with job satisfaction, involvement, and organizational commitment.

### Empirical Studies Based on the Fry et al. (2005) Spiritual Leadership Measure

Fry et al. (2005) tested Fry's (2003) initial model of spiritual leadership at the individual level using longitudinal data and found it to positively predict organizational commitment and productivity. The results provided strong initial support for the causal model of spiritual leadership and the reliability and validity of its measures. The researchers developed a methodology for establishing a baseline for future organizational development interventions as well as an action agenda for future research on spiritual leadership. They argued that spiritual leadership theory offers a springboard for a new paradigm of leadership theory, research, and practice given that it incorporates and extends transformational and charismatic theories as well as ethics- and values-based theories (e.g., authentic and servant leadership).

Fry, Hannah, Noel, and Walumbwa (2011) examined emerging leaders at a military academy and found general support for the model of spiritual leadership at the unit level. They supported the hypothesis that the variables comprising spiritual leadership (i.e., hope/faith, vision, and altruistic love) together form a higher order formative construct that positively influences spiritual well-being in groups (i.e., calling and membership). Further analysis revealed a positive and significant link from spiritual leadership (mediated through group membership and meaning/calling) to key outcome variables, including organizational commitment, productivity, and three measures of squad unit performance taken from two separate external rating sources. These findings provide additional evidence that spiritual leadership positively influences important personal and organizational outcomes and is a key component of SRW.

Researchers other than Fry and his colleagues have confirmed the validity of the spiritual leadership model and its positive influence on important individual and organizational outcomes. Bodia and Ali (2012) studied the impact of spiritual leadership on banking executives and their employees in Pakistan. They concluded that vision and altruistic love positively influenced calling and membership, and, in turn, job satisfaction, productivity, and organizational commitment. Chen and Yang (2012) conducted a study in selected finance and retail service industries in Taiwan and tested the spiritual leadership model's effect on followers' organizational citizenship behaviors; they found that spiritual leadership positively affects employees' perception of meaning/calling and membership, which, in turn, affects their altruism and conscientiousness. Chen et al. (2012) studied 20 companies in Taiwan and 12 in China across three major industries: manufacturing, financial/banking, and retailing service industries. They confirmed the validity of the spiritual leadership model and also found a positive impact on self-career management behavior and unit productivity.

Javanmard (2012) researched the impact of spiritual leadership in an Iranian Islamic work environment. Using hope/faith, vision,

and altruistic love from Fry et al. (2005) as predictor variables and using inner life, meaningful work, and sense of community from Ashmos and Duchon (2000) as mediator variables, they reported the following positive associations:

- organizational vision affects employees' inner life;
- altruism affects employees' sense of community and meaningful work;
- faith in work affects employees' inner life, sense of community, and meaningful work;
- meaningful work affects employees' work performance; and
- inner life affects employees' work performance.

### Empirical Studies Using Other Measures of SRW

Kolodinsky et al. (2008) sampled working graduate students at two large universities. Using Wheat's (1991) Human Spirituality Scale, they found that organizational spirituality positively related to organizational involvement, identification, and satisfaction; and negatively related to organizational frustration. Hall et al. (2012) studied working mothers. Using the measure developed by Mahoney et al. (2005), they found that those with greater levels of sanctification of work had higher satisfaction with work and lower interrole conflict.

Ming-Chia (2012) studied managers' motivation to manipulate financial reports to achieve predetermined targets; their results indicated that SRW negatively related to the motivations for inappropriate earnings management. Petchsawang and Duchon (2012) found that their measure of SRW positively influenced work performance. Rego, Cunha, and Souto (2008) sampled 154 organizations in Portugal, using Ashmos and Duchon's (2000) and Milliman et al.'s (2003) measurement instruments. Their results indicated a positive relationship between SRW and attachment and loyalty, and that individuals in organizations who reported higher levels of SRW were less instrumentally committed.

### Summary of SRW Empirical Research to Date

A number of studies using multiple measures have found SRW to be positively related to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, productivity, and other measures of performance (see Table 1). In addition, the empirical research on SRW has demonstrated that measures of SRW are significantly related to altruism and conscientiousness (Chen & Yang, 2012); self-career management (Chen et al., 2012); reduced interrole conflict (Hall et al., 2012); reduced frustration (Kolodinsky et al., 2008); organization-based self-esteem (Milliman et al., 2003); involvement (Kolodinsky et al., 2008); retention (Milliman et al., 2003); and ethical behavior (Ming-Chia, 2012). These results are consistent across various countries and cultures, including Brazil, China, India, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, Taiwan, and the United States.

### Challenges Associated With Integrative Work and Future Research in SRW

Integrative work in SRW presents several challenging questions: Should spirituality be used for instrumental ends at work or as a central organizing principle?; How much spiritual expression should be allowed at work, accommodating an individual's right for SRW expression versus company needs (and what are the legal

issues surrounding this potential conflict, analyzing SRW at multiple levels?); and How can a social-scientific approach to studying business and management be integrated with a philosophical/theological approach to studying spirituality?

### Spirituality and Religion

One central issue in SRW concerns the relationship between spirituality and religious approaches to SRW (Fry, 2003; Hill et al., 2013). Many have felt that viewing SRW through the lens of religious traditions and practice is divisive in that, to the extent the religion views itself as the only path to God and salvation, it excludes those who do not share in the denominational tradition (Cavanagh, 1999). Furthermore, religious practices often conflict with the social, legal, and ethical foundations of business, law, and public and nonprofit administration (Nadesan, 1999). Thus, religion can lead to the arrogant view that a particular company, faith, or society is better, morally superior, or worthier than another (Nash, 1994). Imbuing religion into SRW can foster zealotry at the expense of organizational goals, offend constituents and customers, and decrease morale and employee well-being (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Further exploration of the relationship between religion and spirituality is therefore essential to honor the integrity of both disciplines while seeking the role each has to play in any integrative theory of SRW.

### Technique for Instrumental Ends Versus Central Organizing Principle

Another recurring debate in the SRW literature revolves around the motive for integrating spirituality, religion, and work. For example, should spirituality be integrated into the workplace for instrumental ends (e.g., to improve financial performance) or should spirituality be seen as a central organizing principle for the workplace? Driscoll and Wiebe (2007) argued that SRW is a technique often used for instrumental and financial ends. Giacalone and Jurkiewicz represented the instrumental view well, arguing that to be confident our suppositions are more than personal advocacy requires the dispassionate objectivism afforded by the scientific method. Organizations need persuasive evidence that SRW is positively related to bottom-line performance; anything less would bring into question their fiduciary responsibility to stockholders and their moral responsibility to stakeholders. For workplace spirituality to be a viable construct in improving organizations and the people in them, it requires a degree of confidence we can only attain through scientific measurement (Krahnke, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2003).

Driscoll and Wiebe (2007), on the other hand, used Jacques Ellul's philosophical critique of "technical dominance" in the modern world to argue that spirituality should be the central organizing principle in the workplace rather than a means to the end of profitability. They claimed that where technique reigns, human values and value judgments are threatened and critical faculties are suppressed, because "technique never observes the distinction between moral and immoral use" (Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007, p. 334). They called for an honoring of the soul on its own terms in the workplace, so that human values and critical faculties will not be eroded.

During the same time, Fry and Slocum (2008) and Fry and Nisiewicz (2013) made the case that this is not an either/or prop-

osition, and called for new business models that accentuate ethical and spiritual leadership, employee well-being, sustainability, and social responsibility—without sacrificing profitability, revenue growth, and other indicators of financial performance. Drawing from the emerging fields of SRW, spiritual leadership, and conscious capitalism, they presented a general model of leadership that can simultaneously optimize employee well-being, social responsibility, and organizational effectiveness, thereby maximizing the triple bottom line.

### Advocating for SRW Versus Suppressing It

Another challenge to integrative work in SRW focuses on whether and how spirituality and religion should be expressed in the workplace. The study of SRW has, to date, been relatively free of denominational politics and ideological conflict. In fact, religious ideology itself has been virtually disregarded. Under the rubric of spirituality, the issues that have surface have avoided any mention of a comparatively right-and-wrong ideology (Hill et al., 2013). At the same time, there are problems inherent in suppressing an employee's religious and spiritual side. While some companies have claimed to be values-free by suppressing all religious/spiritual expression, Hicks (2003) noted that the purely secularist position, which prohibits any expression of religion or spirituality in the workplace, also imposes a values-based worldview on its employees. Hicks argued that it is simply impossible to avoid taking a values-laden position vis-à-vis the diverse religious and spiritual (and cultural and political) commitments that employees and managers bring with them to work. His proposed solution, "respectful pluralism," offers a middle way between (a) advocating particular religions and spiritualities in the workplace, and (b) prohibiting religious and spiritual expression altogether. According to Hicks,

The guiding principle of respectful pluralism is termed the *presumption of inclusion*. It can be stated as follows: To the greatest extent, workplace organizations should allow employees to express their religious, spiritual, cultural, political, and other commitments at work, subject to the limiting norms of noncoercion, nondegradation, and nonestablishment, and in consideration of the reasonable instrumental demands of the for-profit enterprise. (Hicks, 2003, p. 173)

Hicks (2003), among others (e.g., Miller, 2007), challenged the separation of religion and spirituality as a relatively recent phenomenon, and argued that the separation is not sustainable.

He argued that the mantra "spirituality unites, but religion divides" is much more problematic than scholars or proponents of spiritual leadership would have us believe because the corresponding definitions of spirituality are too broad to be coherent and the frequent emphasis on the potential of spirituality to create unity or common ground in the workplace overlooks difficult issues.

### Individual Rights Versus Company Needs

Dean, Forniciari, and Safranski (2008) asked how a company should accommodate an individual's right to spiritual expression when this involves proscribed behaviors such as proselytizing or engaging in actions based on spiritual/religious beliefs that often are disruptive to the firm, other employees, or its customers. They asked, for example, how a firm should respond to a request from

40 Muslim employees on a production line to leave at the same time for their daily prayers. The authors noted that the SRW paradigm currently provides little direction on how individuals of different faiths should interact with the religious rights of others who may have very different worldviews and beliefs and to what degree employees have to honor or accept other faiths as legitimate?

Another example they provided was the case of a Christian woman who came to work wearing a sizable button with a color photo of a fetus, claiming that her religion required her to witness against abortion. Her coworkers complained and, when she refused the accommodations management offered, she was fired. Although she sued the company, she lost the case when the court ruled that, by offering other reasonable options, the firm met the standard of employer responsibility to accommodate the employee's religious beliefs (*Wilson v. U.S. West Communications*, 1995).

### Legal Issues Concerning SRW

Other legal issues have emerged regarding individual rights versus company needs. Most of these issues have revolved around Title VII of the *Civil Rights Act* (1964). Title VII protects employees from discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. With regard to religion, the law prohibits discrimination in recruitment, hiring, promotion, assignments, discipline, compensation, or benefits; prohibits harassment or creation of a hostile environment due to religious observations or practices; and prohibits retaliation against employees because of their religious beliefs or practices. In addition, employers must not prescribe or proscribe religious participation as a condition of employment and must provide reasonable accommodations for religious practices or beliefs.

At issue is the freedom of both employees and employers to express and practice their beliefs without being harassed and without contributing to a hostile environment for their coworkers. However, balancing the legal rights of employees, coworkers, employers, and customers in this area has proven challenging to our judicial system. While other hostile environment charge categories' (e.g., sexual harassment) complaint numbers have remained essentially flat for a decade, religious discrimination complaints have doubled on a percentage basis. *Schaeffer and Mattis* (2012) reported that, in the last 12 years, religious bias complaints have increased over 69%. These lawsuits have centered on lack of accommodations and harassment. In addition, the monetary rewards from these claims have nearly doubled over the 10-year period of 2000–2010 (*Borstorff, Cunningham, & Clark*, 2012).

This is at least in part due to the power differential between employers and employees. Courts have often viewed an employer's religious expression as inherently more coercive than employees' religious expression and, because of this, there is the likelihood that employers will restrict religious expression in the workplace in an effort to comply with federal law and thereby avoid potential liability. To insulate themselves from liability, some employers may forbid all religious expression, creating a zero-tolerance policy for religion in their workplaces (*Adams*, 2012; *Kaminer*, 2000, 2010).

Religion in this legal context has been defined broadly. According to the *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Compliance Manual* (2008), a belief is considered religious not only from

a traditional religious institution perspective, but also if it is religious in the person's own mind. As a result, spirituality, however defined, may also be considered religious with regard to interpreting and enforcing the law. Indeed, the law has cleared the way for allowing nonspecific faith tradition expression or spirituality to the point that some "new age" training programs designed to improve employee motivation through meditation, yoga, and biofeedback may conflict with the nondiscriminatory provisions of Title VII (*Dean & Safranski*, 2008).

*Dean and Safranski* (2008) have suggested that using a legalistic approach to manage the conflict between employee's and employer's rights to religious expression and employee's countervailing right not to be harassed may not help managers. Crafting policy that prohibits or curtails SRW expression in the interest of creating a harassment-free environment may backfire—all it takes is one employee's claim. In addition, adhering to policy that is meant to be inclusive and nondiscriminatory may also backfire. Rather than following the contradictory legalistic path, *Dean and Safranski* (2008) and *Fry & Nisiewicz* (2013) suggested a noninterventionist approach. Employers should allow employees to choose their own SRW opportunities without pressure or sanctions, including reflection time during the day, a "personal days" policy for spiritual recharging, organizational space for SRW activities, and a non-denominational chaplain who offers support to employees.

### Analyzing SRW at Multiple Levels

Strategic leaders are ultimately responsible for creating vision and value congruence across the individual, unit, and organizational levels as well as for developing effective relationships between the organization and environmental stakeholders (*Fry*, 2003). At the organizational or strategic level, SRW is a descriptor of the organization as an entity. *Giacalone and Jurkiewicz* (2003) defined workplace spirituality "as a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promote employees' experience of organizational transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy" (p. 13). As such, SRW at this level can be considered in terms of a common vision and set of cultural values for all employees.

At the team or unit level, organizations must establish a culture with values that reflect the organization's culture. Especially important for SRW is the concept of empowerment, which involves power sharing: the delegation of power, authority, and responsibility to organizational followers (*Bowen & Lawler*, 1995; *Spreitzer*, 1996). It is this linkage that creates the cross-level connection between group and individual jobs and the organization's vision and values, thereby giving followers a sense of direction in which to act. In addition to empowerment, this process of providing directed autonomy, competence, and relatedness also provides the foundation for intrinsic motivation and SRW (*Deci & Ryan*, 2000; *Ford & Fottler*, 1995; *Fry*, 2003; *Fry et al.*, 2011).

At the individual level, SRW reinforces a set of values that provide the foundation for a person's ethical system as well as the experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating a sense of connectedness to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy (*Giacalone & Jurkiewicz*, 2003; *Fry & Nisiewicz*, 2013). Research has not yet investigated whether employees bring spiritual values into the workplace, or adopt them to



organizational requirements (Jurkiewicz, 2010). In much the same way, some employees may feel that it is best to leave spiritual values at home because they may sense that spirituality does not fit the organization's cultural values. Thus, to understand SRW at the individual level, investigation into the integration of individual spiritual values with organizational cultural values is necessary.

A further complexity has arisen when trying to establish a relationship between individual SRW, group SRW, and organizational SRW: The empirical issue of when it is appropriate to aggregate individual-level responses to the unit or organizational levels to determine if these constructs based on aggregated data have validity when used to represent higher level phenomena. Indeed, in the postmaterialism literature, this problem of aggregation has been a source of continual debate (e.g., Grendstad & Selle, 1997). If SRW is conceptualized at the group and/or organizational level, more work is needed to determine if and how measures can be developed that avoid the pitfalls of measurement model misspecification and aggregation bias (James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1993; Klein & Kozlowski, 2000; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Lee, 2003).

### Methodological Issues

Finally, methodological challenges have arisen in the study of SRW. As Benefiel (2005) pointed out, the dominance of a quantitative approach in social-scientific empirical research has raised important questions for the study of spirituality: How can SRW be studied qualitatively to get at the lived experience of spirituality and religion within organizational contexts? Are there questions in the study of SRW that do not fit into traditional social-scientific research paradigms? What can SRW scholars learn from scholars who study SRW from a philosophical/theological perspective?

Drawing from the work of the philosopher/methodologist Bernard Lonergan, Benefiel (2005) provided a way to integrate the social-scientific perspective and the philosophical/theological perspective in the study of SRW. Examining the organizational theories of Burrell and Morgan, Benefiel noted their conclusion that paradigms based on an objective perspective stand in opposition to those aligned with a subjective perspective. In Burrell and Morgan's (1994) view, "A synthesis is not possible, since in their pure forms they are contradictory" (p. 25). By this logic, the gap between the social-scientific perspective and the philosophical/theological perspective cannot be bridged.

Although Benefiel acknowledged Burrell and Morgan's assertion that no scholar of organizational studies has transcended this subjective-objective divide, she introduced the theories of Lonergan (1957, 1972, 1985) to challenge the subject/object split. Lonergan used the term "the operations of consciousness" to refer to the structures of human "knowing," which include experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding. He then delineated "inherent norms" existing within the structure of consciousness and corresponding to each of the operations of consciousness, as listed in Table 2. According to Lonergan (1985), authentic subjectivity involves heeding these inherent norms and results in objectivity. In this sense, "objectivity, for Lonergan, is the fruit of authentic subjectivity" (Benefiel, 2005, p. 730).

Lonergan, thereby, refuted the assumption, articulated by Burrell, Morgan, and many others, that subjectivity and objectivity are mutually exclusive. Benefiel (2005) concluded that Lonergan pro-

Table 2  
*Lonergan on Human Knowing*

Inherent norms	Operations of consciousness
Be attentive	Experience
Be intelligent	Understand
Be reasonable	Judge
Be responsible	Decide
Be loving	Love

vides the critical grounding in the operations of consciousness for both realist and phenomenological approaches to organizational analysis and that this critical grounding strengthens both approaches and helps scholars see that the two approaches need not be mutually exclusive, viewing one another as absurd and extreme, but instead, when done authentically, can complement one another.

### Discussion

This article has explored the underlying assumptions and rationale of the main trends of SRW as well as offered an overview of the field and challenges to be addressed for its future development. However, we believe that it is not enough to just develop good theories and test them. Our hope is that our work here could be an integrative vehicle for moving the field toward achieving paradigmatic status. Kuhn (1970) defined a paradigm as, "An entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community" (p. 175). In other words, a paradigm is a philosophical and theoretical framework of a scientific school or discipline within which theories, laws, and generalizations, and the methods to test them are formulated. Although one may argue the extent to which SRW may currently be viewed as an emerging paradigm in the social sciences, there is no doubt that there are a number of theoretical and empirical issues that need to be addressed before this promise can be fulfilled.

### Theory Building and SRW

The most promising theoretical approaches to SRW to date are the meditation integration approach (Biberman & Tischler, 2008; Heaton & Schmidt-Wilk, 2008), Fry's model of spiritual leadership (Fry, 2008; Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013), and Hicks's respectful pluralism. Heaton and Schmidt-Wilk's meditation integration approach has shown promise because of its empirical base linking meditation, ego development, and leadership effectiveness, and simplicity in practical application. Similarly, Fry's spiritual leadership approach has shown promise because of its strong theoretical base and potential for practical application. Hicks's respectful pluralism underlies these practical, empirically based approaches, providing a context in which they can be practiced effectively and ethically. Another promising area to explore would be to examine spirituality-based versus religion-based research and how these can provide a springboard for building on existing theory.

As key components of SRW, workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership can be viewed as constructs in the initial concept/elaboration stage of development (Hunt, 1999; Reichers & Schneider, 1990). At this stage, it is important that initial theories meet the four components of Dubin's (1978) criteria that provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for the development of any

theoretical model. They must specify (a) the units or variables of interest to the researcher, (b) congruence as defined by the laws of relationship among units of the model that specify how the units are associated, (c) boundaries within which the laws of relationship are expected to operate, and (d) contingency effects that specify system states within which the units of the theory take on characteristic values that are deterministic and persist through time. Relative to Dubin's model, spiritual leadership theory satisfies these conditions (Fry, 2003, 2008). It identifies nine units or variables in a causal model whose linkages are hypothesized to be positively related. Subject to further testing, it is currently proposed to be a universal (e.g., no contingency effects) model that holds across the individual, team, and organizational levels.

### Empirical Research on SRW

The studies reviewed have used different models, measures, and approaches, and been tested globally across different cultures and countries. Yet they have produced consistent findings. SRW has been seen to positively influence organizational commitment, job satisfaction, performance, and productivity at both the individual and unit levels. Other promising findings have included a positive influence on ethical and organizational citizenship behavior. The two main measurement instruments developed by Ashmos and Duchon (2000) and Fry et al. (2005) have been used to empirically test spirituality at work in a number of organizations across several countries. On closer examination, however, this is not entirely surprising because, although developed separately, the Ashmos and Duchon dimensions of inner life, meaningful work, and sense of community are conceptually very similar to the inner life, calling, and membership spiritual leadership constructs—a similarity that certainly warrants further research.

Spiritual leadership theory in particular can be viewed as an emerging paradigm within the broader context of SRW (Fry, 2005a). However, research on several fronts is necessary to further establish the validity of it and other SRW approaches before widely applying them as models for organizational transformation to foster systemic change and development. For example, the importance of SRW for managing diversity is an important area for additional theory building and research. Although further study is certainly needed on legal issues and SRW, research is also needed on the influence of SRW on organizational diversity, including departmental, geographical, and across divisions in larger corporations. Although there is emerging evidence of the positive influence of SRW internationally, further exploration and testing of SRW theories and models in different cultural and country settings is needed. Outcomes across levels hypothesized to be affected by SRW have yet to be explored, especially in terms of the role calling and membership can play. Additional longitudinal studies are needed to test for changes in key variables over time, particularly as relating to performance. Studies incorporating more objective performance measures from multiple sources are also needed, including profitability, sales growth, and market share (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Qualitative studies that explore the lived experience of SRW are warranted both for leaders, followers, and the dyadic relationship between them. Finally, the conceptual distinction between spiritual leadership theory and other values-based leadership theories, such as transformational leadership, authentic leadership, ethical leadership, and servant leadership, in

relation to SRW should also be refined (Fry, 2003; Fry, Matherly, Whittington, & Winston, 2007; Fry & Whittington, 2005). Further research might investigate whether these theories are perhaps mutually reinforcing or serve to moderate the effects of one another.

In sum, SRW is an emerging area of scholarly inquiry that has an atypical history in that it has its roots in philosophy and theology rather than in a more established field of social science such as, in this case, the psychology of religion and spirituality. However, since the landmark study by Mitroff and Denton (1999), SRW has begun to experience some convergence, both theoretically and empirically, on the importance of an inner life or spiritual practice in fostering a vision and set of altruistic values that satisfy fundamental spiritual needs for calling and community, which in turn positively influence important individual and organizational outcomes. This is an important beginning. However, the field of the psychology of religion and spirituality has much to offer that can be applied to the workplace. It is our hope that this article can be a springboard for such an integrative endeavor.

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