

## **Entrepreneurship and Spirituality An Exploration Using Grounded Theory**

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Entrepreneurship and Spirituality: An Exploration Using Grounded Theory

Most spirituality and work literature refers only to larger firms. Entrepreneurship literature has been based on behavior, intentions, and contextual variables and ignores or subordinates spiritual concepts. A

grounded theory research project was conducted to explore the relationship between spirituality and entrepreneurship. The inclusion of spiritual concepts enabled deeper values of business owners to surface and new models to emerge. Initially, three distinct modalities of entrepreneurs were identified, which were expanded into five: *'Make me Whole,' 'Soul Seekers,' 'Conflicting Goals,' 'Mostly Business,'* and *'Strictly Business.'* Respondent comments that represent each modality are presented and indicate various levels of dependency or independency on spiritually-oriented attributes.

## **Introduction**

The study of spirituality as it relates to entrepreneurs and their work organizations has, in large part, been unsuccessful in providing a cohesive explanation of the impact spiritual elements have on an entrepreneur's decision to initiate and maintain a business venture. A significant portion of scholarly work conducted with spirituality and work only pertains to large corporate entities (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Burack, 1999; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Wagner-Marsh & Conley, 1999). The preponderance of entrepreneurial research typically ignores spirituality altogether or simply utilizes it as a subordinate factor (Brockhaus, 1980; Cromie & Hayes, 1991; Gartner, et al., 1992; Liles, 1974; Krueger, 2000; McClelland, 1965).

Previous analysis has demonstrated numerous factors that prompt one to pursue an entrepreneurial career. Various entrepreneurship researchers have attempted to cluster these factors into meaningful subgroups: pull and push factors, intrinsic and extrinsic factors, as well as various motivation theories (Blanchflower & Oswald, 1998; Bradley and Roberts, 2004; Brockhaus, 1980; Cromie & Hayes, 1991; Dehler & Welsh, 1994; Kolvereid, 1996; McClelland, 1965; Schjoedt & Shaver, 2007). However, the underlying significance of spirituality has remained elusive. The authors' intent is to fully integrate spiritual themes into the research process as a means of discovering new approaches to the exploration of entrepreneurship, and at the same time provide a deeper and more congruent understanding of what occurs when individuals blend mind, body, and soul with work.

A multiphase exploratory study using grounded research was conducted to lift the shroud of ambiguity surrounding spirituality and entrepreneurship. The inclusion of spiritual concepts enabled a collection of deeper values and intentionalities possessed by business owners to surface. The resulting emergent data from a three year intensive research process indicates that spirituality should be an integral part of understanding the entrepreneur. The authors have constructed a model suggesting that individuals seek and live an entrepreneurial lifestyle because of motivational cues that serve the 'self' (internal/spiritual) and/or the ego (external).

The researchers began by interviewing an initial sample of 35 entrepreneurs utilizing a loosely structured set of questions to explore perceptions and cognitions of spirituality and work. A model emerged as researchers discovered that many respondents shared like attributes creating three distinct clusters. As a result, three modalities of entrepreneurs that started and stayed in business emerged and were given the following designations: *'Make me Whole,'* who were internally focused or spiritually-oriented; *'Cash is King'* who were externally focused; and *'Hybrids'* who were conflicted, or possessed characteristics of the other two modalities. However, due to the small size and structure of the initial sample, additional work with a larger more diverse sample was necessary before the model could be substantiated.

A second larger exploratory study with expanded methodology to better define the initial model, enabled a new more comprehensive version to materialize. Whereas, the initial model identified three distinct modalities of entrepreneurs, the expanded project revealed five modalities on a parallel continuum, designated as follows: (1) *'Make me Whole,'* (2) *'Soul Seekers,'* (3) *'Conflicting Goals,'* (4) *'Mostly Business,'* and (5) *'Strictly Business.'* Each cluster being composed of entrepreneurs that shares a similar level of dependency or independency on spiritually-oriented attributes.

Research of this kind can significantly enrich and advance entrepreneurship literature. It provides new and robust models for the study and measurement of spirituality at work pertaining to entrepreneurs and their venture activities. This in turn enhances the level of comprehension and understanding of complex perspectives that entrepreneurs bring to their businesses. Models and theories contribute significantly to the knowledge and awareness of consultants and educators in the field, who are sustaining and developing the entrepreneurs of today and tomorrow. In short, a deeper and truer sense of the entrepreneurial phenomenon can be realized and put into practice (Krueger, 2000, 2007).

In keeping with the tradition of grounded theory, wherein the literature review originates from various themes ascertained during study development, the next part of this paper includes a brief summary of the research on spirituality at work as well as entrepreneurship. An overview of grounded theory and its application during the formation of the authors' model will follow. Next, an overview of the methodology will be followed by a discussion of results. The final section will describe implications of the results, as well as suggestions for future research.

### **Spirituality and Work Literature**

In recent years workplace spirituality has received increased attention in the

organizational sciences (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Mitroff & Denton, 1999). The workplace has been found to play a significant role in fulfilling an individual's need for wholeness and integration. It has been suggested that individuals are utilizing work as a means of finding a purpose for their lives (DeValk, 1996). Many are seeking work that provides a calling and an environment that is friendly and open to the expression of personal values (Cash & Gray, 2000). They want to be part of a workplace of individuals who can fully employ their best capabilities; a collective community seeking to contribute by doing 'good work' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

### **Spirituality at Work Definition**

Some researchers believe that differing perspectives held on defining spirituality in the workplace has resulted in ambiguous and inconsistent findings in research literature (Butts, 1999; Cavanaugh, 1999; Konz & Ryan, 1999; Milliman, et al., 1999). One key differentiator among scholars surrounds the question of whether spirituality must embody religious perspectives. For some researchers, spirituality at work is associated with a relationship with the 'Divine' or some other essence that facilitates a congruent work life, with or without the presence of religious tenets (Schmidt-Wilk, et al., 2000). Many are highly motivated by the spiritual need to experience a sense of transcendence and community in whatever they do (Neal, 2000).

Opposing views see religion with a sectarian orientation, restricted to exclusive rituals and doctrine, adding more division than unity. It is the cherished individual focus of spirituality that facilitates tolerance and heterogeneity. For those individuals, spirituality is a process of focusing within, in order to gain an awareness of 'self,' producing both an inner connection with 'self' and a connection with others (Covey, 1989; Mitroff, et al., 1994; Morris, 1997; Neal, et al., 1999; Peck, 1993; Roof, 1992; Stein & Hollwitz, 1992). As such, an individual's spirituality emerges from a deep connection to their deeper values (Gibbons, 2000; Milliman, et al. 2003). Laabs (1995) says that spirituality in work is more than just empowering people, it is allowing everyone within an organization to live out their personal values.

Because of these differing perspectives, the researchers were interested in further exploring how previous research has defined workplace spirituality. Using a factor analysis of 696 respondents, Ashmos and Dunchon (2000) defined workplace spirituality as the "recognition of an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community." They suggest that individuals are spiritual beings, needing to be fed spiritually at work. Concluding that spirituality at work is about bringing together an individual's mind, body and spirit into the

workplace environment in which individuals experience more than their required tasks.

These findings are consistent with Mitroff & Denton (1999) in which respondents described spirituality and work as the “basic desire to find ultimate meaning and purpose in one’s life and to live an integrated life.” These definitions provide a broader definition for spirituality and work. From these fundamental definitions, the following spiritual themes and attributes emerged for further exploration: finding meaning and purpose in life, living an integrated life, and being in community with others, especially in an entrepreneurial context and setting.

### **Finding Ultimate Meaning and Purpose in Life**

Moore (1992) considers that when work becomes a vocation and calling, it provides an individual with greater meaning and identity. When individuals find meaning and purpose through their life’s work, it becomes a calling (Thompson, 2001). Work as a calling requires the alignment of unique talents and gifts with the needs of the world. Only then does work become a vocation, rather than a job (Leider, 1997).

Leider quotes Oliver Wendell Holmes in his book, *The Power of Purpose*, “most of us go to our graves with our music still inside us” (Leider, 1997, p.118). Leider goes on to suggest that crisis is often necessary to realize one’s calling to fulfill a deep purpose (Leider, 1997). Those who become aware of their calling but do not follow it are likely to remain depressed with an undeveloped soul (King & Nicols, 1999; Jung, 1933; Mitroff & Denton, 1999). From where does this calling originate? Some have suggested that it comes from within the ‘self.’ It is the expression of personal essence, the inner core, the ‘voice’ within that must surface; a deeper ‘self,’ calling out for actualization and integration (Jung, 1933; Leider, 1997).

### **Living an Integrated Life**

To live an integrated life requires a connection to ‘self’ (Eddinger, 1972; Harding, 1965). One of the attributes of connection to ‘self’ is reaching full potential (King & Nicols, 1999). Mitroff & Denton (1999) found that the “ability to fully utilize full potential” was the first choice by the participants in their study when explaining the source of meaning and purpose in life. These participants were employees of a large organization. It is interesting to note that a decisive majority wished to have more opportunity to completely express and develop the ‘self’ at work.

Alignment of personal values with organizational values (Mitroff & Denton, 1999) as well as with organizational mission and vision (DeValk, 1996) are also necessary to feel a sense of wholeness. From this alignment of culture,

values and people, an enormous sense of community and opportunity for personal contribution materialize.

### **Community and Contribution**

Milliman, et al. (2003) suggests that finding one's purpose at work produces an alignment of personal inner being with the organization's vision and mission. It creates a deep connection to coworkers and an understanding that an individual's inner life must be nourished and lived out at work. People who experience work as a 'calling' seem to enjoy a personal sense of wholeness, and are energized by a spiritual connection with others (Depree, 1989; Marcic, 1997; Morris, 1997; Stein & Hollowitz, 1992). This connection with others provides a sense of fellowship (Vail, 1998) and creates a community within the workplace (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Through fellowship at work, individuals find a channel to actualize calling by bringing "spirit and livelihood back together again" (Fox, 1995).

Creating or contributing to community does not necessarily mean changing the world; rather it can be about working at some meaningful contribution to the community. Contributions produce a unifying purpose that, like a magnetic field attracts and magnifies energy, providing a goal upon which all lesser goals depend. Without such a purpose, even the best ordered consciousness lacks meaning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). From where does this energy originate - is it driven from external or internal factors?

### **Internal or External**

McGeachy (2001) suggests that spirituality at work is fueled by personal fulfillment and builds high morale in the organization. Fulfilling purpose originates from deep within the individual. It is part of a central core or essence where people have a profound sense of who they are, where they come from, and where they are going. It provides an enormous source of energy and direction that gives meaning to life. The work and task performance is internalized as a form of intrinsic motivation (Dehler & Welsh, 1994). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) refers to this experience as being in '*flow*.'

According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991, 2000), humans have a fundamental need to feel autonomous to choose their actions. When the autonomous need is satisfied, self-determined motivation toward an activity is enhanced (Sheldon, et al., 2001). Self-determined motivation results from performance of a behavior or action out of personal choice, satisfaction, or pleasure.

On the other hand, non-self-determined motivation implies engaging in an activity or behavior for controlled reasons. Non-self determined motivation

can be observed when one performs a behavior in order to attain a positive end state (e.g., obtaining a reward) or to avoid a negative end state (e.g., avoiding a punishment).

In *Success Built to Last*, Porras, Emery and Thompson (2007) refer to factors that motivate entrepreneurs. Wealth, fame, and power were not the goals or accomplishments respondent entrepreneurs felt were important. Money and recognition were only byproducts of work; they are "outcomes of passionately working often on an entirely different objective that is often a personal cause or calling" (p. 20).

### **Entrepreneurial Literature**

Social and behavioral psychologists were the first to explore what it means to be an entrepreneur. As psychologists, the research they conducted focused heavily on psychological factors to explain entrepreneurship, most predominately traits and behaviors. From these researchers emerged a number of trait and behavioral based theories (Hornaday & Aboud, 1971; Hisrich & O'Brien, 1981; McClelland, 1961). The hallmark of these approaches being that an understanding of the entrepreneurship phenomenon could be realized by determining the personality traits and external contexts of entrepreneurs' ideas and ventures. Gartner, (1985) proposed four dimensions: individual, organization, environment and venture process.

### **Intentionality**

Trait and behavior models improved the understanding of how one becomes an entrepreneur, but do not go far enough to explain why entrepreneurship would be chosen over organizational employment. Entrepreneurship clearly represents planned, intentional behavior and thus seems amenable to research using formal models of intentions (Bird, 1988; Katz & Gartner, 1988; Krueger, 1993). Intentions are the best predictor of behavior, and they are both shaped and influenced by personal and situational variables (Krueger, et al., 2000). So, by focusing on intentions, scholars began to take a wider, more holistic view of entrepreneurs. Instead of simply looking at characteristics and behaviors, other variables such as personal history, value systems, attitudes, and perceptions were examined.

Foundations of intentions research in entrepreneurship stem from two models: **Ajzen's theory of planned behavior** (TPB) and **Shapero's model of the entrepreneurial event**. Ajzen (1991), focused on intentions to link attitudes with behavior. Originating from Bandura's (1986) self efficacy from social learning theory, TPB posits three antecedents to intention or planned behavior (1) "attitude toward the behavior," (2) "subjective norm," and (3) "perceived behavior control" (p. 188). Three

antecedents affect intention which affects actual behavior. Both internal state of the person (internal locus) and external or contextual variables (external locus) influence intentions and ultimately actions (Bird, 1988). Self efficacy is critical to self perception and personal success (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994). Gartner, (1985) went beyond the individual to combine environment, process and resulting organization. TPB does appear applicable to entrepreneurship (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993).

Shapero in an effort to improve on traditional definitions of entrepreneurship prefers to focus on the 'entrepreneurial event' rather than the person. Individuals are persuaded toward "life path changes" such as entrepreneurial actions by factors such as "job, family situation, inertia, and daily pushes and pulls." External factors include "negative displacements" such as refugee movements or job related changes (being fired, demoted, or transferred). "Internal displacements" include attitude shifts such as age milestones or mid life crises. While negative forces are more powerful, Shapero also discusses "positive pulls," such as "perceptions of desirability:" financial reward, personal values, family, peers, work experience along with "perceptions of feasibility" such as financial or other support and evidence of success. (Shapero & Sokol, 1982, 78-84).

Robinson et al. (1991) argue that there is no direct link between demographic variables and entrepreneurial behavior. As they point out, "the concepts are dependent on the existence of more fundamental characteristics that influence the entrepreneur" (Robinson, et al., 1991, p. 17). Scherer, et al. (1989), Krueger (1993), and Krueger & Carsrud (1993) argue that role models affect entrepreneurial intentions, but only if they affect attitudes.

**Push/Pull Theory.** Push/pull approaches, laid out effectively in Vesper (1990) hold that negative and positive factors attract individuals to entrepreneurship. Push factors are negative situational issues, such as economic necessity, conflicts with employer or employment, joblessness (Olofsson, 1986), career setbacks (Gilad, 1986), and limited alternative opportunities (Greenberger, 1988) that 'push' the individual toward entrepreneurship. Conversely, pull factors are characterized as affirmative events that 'pull' one to entrepreneurship. Need for achievement (McClelland, 1961), internal locus of control, belief in self-determination (Rotter, 1966; Brockhaus, 1982), higher propensity for risk-taking (Slevin, 1992), identification of a market opportunity, and strong sense of personal ability to perform (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994) are all examples of pull factors of entrepreneurship. Researchers have found both push and pull factors to be extremely influential. Shapero's work (1982) demonstrated that individuals are much more apt to form a company based on negative information rather

than positive. Amit (1994) found that pull entrepreneurs were more successful than push entrepreneurs in both personal income and sales per employee. He postulated that this was due to the fact that pull entrepreneurs are lured by the attractiveness of a personal business idea. More recently, Schjoedt and Shaver (2007) could not confirm 'pull' factors and found evidence against the 'push' factors. The spirit, soul or even a search for meaning and purpose, while certainly challenging to measure, have never been considered in any of these studies.

**Internal/External.** Somewhat parallel to 'push/pull,' this concept examines motivation attributes that originate from within the individual (internal) or from the environment (external). Internal attributes are commonly linked to pull factors and consist of variables such as personal ability, skill set, feelings, experiences, and knowledge. External factors are generally in keeping with push factors and include attributes like the economy, consumers, investors, product demand, and competition (Shaver, et al., 2001; Hunger, et al., 2002). Internally motivated individuals tend to proactively seek entrepreneurship while the externally motivated react to surrounding circumstances in entrepreneurial decisions and actions (Hunger, et al., 2002).

These theories have contributed significantly to research by providing a foundation for understanding personal characteristics and situational factors that motivate entrepreneurship. Push/pull models revealed that entrepreneurship can result from both positive and negative factors, while the internal/external theory illustrated that the drive for entrepreneurship can come from within one's self or from extraneous circumstances. The collective of push/pull and internal/external theories provide structure and categorization to the many factors that can prompt entrepreneurship, yet shed very little light on why one would choose to follow such a path in the face of alternative career opportunities.

Entrepreneurship research remains silent on factors related to spirituality. Extensive discussions in the early part of this paper reveal numerous studies and narratives expressing the importance and vitality of spirituality at work and the search for meaning and purpose as part of work life. This work both demonstrates efforts to define spirituality and effects of transforming a mere occupation into a vocation with meaning and purpose. While the body of entrepreneurship literature supplied some of the key motivation factors for pursuing an entrepreneurial lifestyle, little exists to tie spirituality to entrepreneurship. Building on this need provides the basis of this study.

### **Research Design**

According to Glaser & Strauss (1967), the most important part of theory

building should begin as close as possible to: NO theory under consideration and NO hypothesis to test. Developing grounded research requires the researchers to become intimately connected with the data if they hope to develop a “testable, relevant, and valid theory.” However, others argue that it is necessary, and somewhat unavoidable, to combine observations from previous literature and the researchers’ prior experience in this process (Eisenhardt, 1989). Building theory requires researchers to begin with a basic description that provides a basis for organizing data into specific categories “according to their properties and dimensions and then using description, to elucidate those categories” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 21). Thus, theory building is a process of abstracting, reducing and relating.

## **Methodological Development**

### **Initial Exploration**

Years of business exposure along with active research experience in entrepreneurship and ‘spirituality and work’ have provided the researchers with a strong foundation. This grounded research from the beginning has sought to explore the spiritual dimensions of entrepreneurs and their businesses. The authors present a detailed description of two phases: first, an initial phase with smaller sample followed by a larger undertaking with expanded sample, analysis and resultant model.

The first convenience or ‘snowball’ sample consisted of 35 entrepreneurs. The initial interview guide utilized open ended questions so that the interview inquiry process could evolve without constricting the rich flow of data. Particular attention was given to the following four key areas of investigation: start-up/secession motivation; work/life experience; personal values and spiritual beliefs; and demography.

Since these themes and related questions were broad, the researchers collected a vast and rich set of narrative data. The interviews lasted at least an hour, with some extending for several hours. Rather than being confined to a question and answer period each interview was conducted in a conversational manner so that important topics, not specifically addressed in the interview guide could materialize for exploration. The interviews were transcribed and imported into Atlas.ti, a software program used to aid in the qualitative analysis of large bodies of text.

An open coding schema for organizing data was developed and implemented. The researchers carefully read each transcribed interview narrative and highlighted sections that pertained to the broad thematic categories. Spontaneous responses (those outside the realm of the chosen thematic categories) were also coded in order to provide a new and/or deeper level of insight into the entrepreneurial experience. Researcher

thoughts and perceptions concerning each case were carefully recorded following each session.

Each interview was organized into concise descriptive segments. This immersion process allowed researchers to become intimately familiar with each entrepreneur and thus observe and detect unique patterns as well as themes running through the cases. Cross-case analysis (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988) was used to compare and contrast constructs that conveyed the story of all 35 respondents. At critical points throughout the ongoing project researcher triangulation through joint coding and analysis of data was utilized to support reliability and validity (Pettigrew, 1988). Further, using cross-reader reliability each coded interview was checked for conformity, and when necessary interviewees were re-contacted to provide answer clarification and/or data verification.

Three distinct modalities emerged from the interviews as patterns formed within the coded data. Respondents tended to gravitate toward one of two main motivational factors. One grouping was motivated primarily by the accumulation of wealth. Wealth was a means to freedom from work and provided the opportunity to pursue the most desired things in life. This group of respondents was referred to as '*Cash is King*.' The opposing group was motivated more by the belief that entrepreneurial activity would fulfill an emotional and/or spiritual void that resided within. This group of respondents was designated '*Make me Whole*'. The respondents in each group shared a set of attributes that indicated their ultimate source of motivation – wealth or spiritual fulfillment.

Using '*Cash is King*' and '*Make me Whole*' as archetypes, each respondent was assigned a position on a spectrum between the two polar opposites that best represented his/her responses. A respondent's location on the spectrum indicated the source of motivation. Those within a close proximity to '*Cash is King*' were driven strongly by financial rewards, while individuals situated closer to '*Make me Whole*' yearned for self fulfillment or what Maslow (1943) termed self-actualization.

A third modality of respondents was discovered that exhibited relatively equal characteristics or attributes from both '*Cash is King*' and '*Make me Whole*.' The motivational source of these respondents was much more difficult to decipher. They were eventually designated as 'hybrids'. One unique commonality among respondents in this hybrid group was that each had been raised in a lower socio-economic environment leading to an uneasy relationship with money and perhaps a life struggle toward its acquisition. Members of this hybrid group sought coexisting doses of both fulfillment and money, but not one over the other as the archetype opposites had.

As explained by Strauss and Corbin (1998), grounded theory requires "sampling on the basis of the emerging concepts, with the aim being to explore the dimensional range or varied conditions along which the properties of concepts vary" (p.73). After the first sample, with a three modality model emerging, it was necessary to expand and enrich the research to see whether another sample would verify the initial work and provide clearer understanding of the relationship between entrepreneurship and spirituality. Goals in the second sample were to use a more structured interview guide and to include a survey questionnaire to be filled out by respondent entrepreneurs. Developing multiple methods of collection allows data triangulation and synergy. Multiple data sources thus enhance construct validity and reliability. (Pandit, 1996)

The four areas of concentration remained constant for phase two of the research: start-up/secession motivation; work/life experience; personal values and spiritual beliefs; and demography. New structured questions were inserted into each concentration to expand the wealth of data. To provide for a larger, more diverse set of interviews, undergraduate and graduate students studying entrepreneurship were given the assignment to interview an entrepreneur using the now restructured interview guide and to secure a response to the written questionnaire instrument. Students submitted a written interview transcription, along with interview recording and completed questionnaire to researchers. A total of 99 interviews and surveys were returned, of which 77 (68% men and 32% women) were found to be usable. Sixty-five percent of these respondents were married and 67% had some college education. 26% were under age 30; 17% between 31 and 40; 29% between 41 and 50; 23% between ages 51 and 60; and 3% over 60.

Each researcher took a randomly assigned portion of the interview sets for coding using a standardized coding sheet. After completion of the coding process, each respondent case was assigned to one of five modality groups that were ultimately designated: '*Make me Whole*,' '*Soul Seekers*,' '*Conflicting Goals*,' '*Mostly Business*,' '*Strictly Business*.' To reduce reader bias and increase inter-rater reliability, two different researchers read and coded each respondent interview. When agreement on an individual case could not be reached between researchers, the interview in question was read by each member of the team and the final ranking was determined by group consensus. The sample distributed across modalities with 14 entrepreneurs in the '*Make me Whole*' group; 10 entrepreneurs were '*Soul Seekers*;' 15 in the '*Conflicting Goals*' group; 17 were '*Mostly Business*;' and 21 were in the '*Strictly Business*' group. Tests were run based on age, gender, years in business, industry and/or income and no statistical

differences were found between modalities.

### **Group Modalities: 'Make Me Whole' to 'Strictly Business'**

Figure 1, below, summarizes respondent results within each of the five modalities. Respondents in all five modalities held certain values in common. Honesty, integrity, and the 'Golden Rule' were the most prevalent personal values given by all respondents. Personal views on the relationship of spirituality and entrepreneurship provided the most significant differentiators between internally and externally motivated respondents. Individuals with higher levels of internal motivation were more likely to believe in and be clear about the connection between spirituality and entrepreneurship. Additionally, the definition of spirituality differed across groups based on the individual's integration of religious beliefs. Internally motivated respondents indicated a greater sense of oneness with their spirituality and were more likely to exhibit behaviors that integrated spirituality into work and business. They were far more likely to start and sustain a business because of a deep connection to the work, while externally motivated individuals did so for independence and monetary reward.

The entrepreneurs in the 'Make Me Whole' modality defined success as "doing a job I love" and "having a job that provides meaning and purpose." This definition of success was congruent with the reason for initiating the venture. Externally motivated individuals are represented in the 'Strictly Business' modality and tied success to job functions such as "successfully completing a project" or "creating wealth." The central 'Conflicting Goals,' modality is truly caught in the middle. These respondents expressed strong dual desire, on the one hand for integration of spirituality and work, while simultaneously on the other for externally motivated rewards.

In addition to the differences highlighted in Figure 1 (below) slighter gradations and nuances provide for two additional modalities, 'Soul Seekers' and 'Mostly Business.' The section that follows further explains and defines these distinctions by providing comprehensive descriptions as well as actual comments of typical respondents in each modality.

	<b>Make me Whole</b>	<b>Soul Seekers</b>	<b>Conflicting Goals</b>	<b>Mostly Business</b>	<b>Strictly Business</b>
<b>Aspect</b>	Internal	Mostly Internal	Conflicting Aspects	Mostly External	External
Personal Values: Golden Rule - Treat			Every group gave this answer		

others as you wish to be treated					
Personal Values:			Every group gave this answer		
Honesty and Integrity					
Connection between Spirituality and Entrepreneurship	Definite connection between spirituality and entrepreneurship; evenly split between religious or spiritual	Majority find connection between spirituality & entrepreneurship; evenly split between religious or spiritual	Definite connection between spirituality and entrepreneurship; whether; More spiritual than religious	Many in this group see connection between spirituality and entrepreneurship; evenly split between religious or spiritual	Very few saw a connection between spirituality and entrepreneurship; Majority state they are neither religious nor spiritual
Behaviors for expressing spirituality at work	Trusting in a higher power; Doing what's right	Personal reflection; Self motivation	Praying; Discussing spirituality with customers & employees	Trusting in a higher power; Doing what's right;	None or not applicable
Joy	Customers; Employees; and Larger community	Financial security; Customers; Work I love	Customers, customers	Customers; Wealth creation	Wealth creation; Financial security
Sadness	Employees, Lack of time, money, or control	Employees; Customers; Not putting all into the business	Fear of failure, Not making goals, Fear of success	Customers; Lack of money; Employees	Customers; Employees; Not enough money
Personal values brought to the business	Fairness, Good positive attitude	Responsibility, Dedication, Hard Work	Responsibility, Dedication, Hard Work	Customer & Supplier Relationships	Hard work; Customer satisfaction
What got them into business	Doing what I love	Financial security; Independence	Independence, Need for control, Financial security;	Wealth creation; Financial security	Inability to work for someone else

			Inability to work for someone else		
Definition of Success	Doing something I love to do; Meaning and Purpose; Helping Others	Doing Something I love to do; Financial security	Helping People; Financial security; Doing something I love to do	Doing something I love to do; Financial security	Financial security; Successfully completing a project; Wealth creation

**Figure 1: Group Modalities**

**Modality 1: 'Make me Whole' (Internal Motivation)**

Individuals seek to integrate business with personal life. They make a definite connection between spirituality and/or religion in their role as entrepreneur. Respondents who practiced religion versus those seeing themselves as spiritual were equally divided in number. Although, respondents in this group shared similar personal values with other modalities, comments and perceptions on values and work integration, as well as objectives for hard work were clearly different. These internally motivated respondents were extremely passionate about their work, believing that work impacts, inspires and changes the lives of those they work with, especially employees. They have a strong desire to please the customer but their underlying reasons indicate personal values rather than sales. Service to customers is more about doing what is good and right than gaining monetary value. They seek meaning and purpose in their own lives and report a high degree of joy. They measure success by adding value to employees, customers and the larger community.

The top three definitions of success for this group included: doing something they loved, finding meaning and purpose in work, and helping others. When these individuals spoke about disappointment, it was based on difficulties in relationships between individuals, rather than loss of money. Discussions on money emerged from frustrations to meet minimum financial needs. Respondents in this group came from a variety of backgrounds and income levels. Some were abundantly successful financially while others were only

scraping by. Some were actually happy to see their employees grow and move on to other work.

Following are typical responses for the 'Make Me Whole' modality: Regarding connection between spirituality and entrepreneurship: When asked about this connection, one respondent said: *"Very, very important in both, because of course one's personal life and business life are very interconnected. No matter how much people don't want it to be, they still are. And so, you just can't have spirituality in your personal life and then not have it in your business life. I think that is almost impossible."*

Regarding spirituality and/or religion as part of work and personal life: Spirituality and/or religion provide the basis for life. It is how they cope with difficulty; it supports their value system and sense of 'self'. It is a connection to 'self' in decision making, a direction for behaviors. One respondent said: *"People would remember me as a hard working person who brings happiness to myself and others — I inspire people, change lives and bring out the best in people. I think that a lot of my agents here are on the same page. I mean we really work on motivating each other and talking about business and spiritual things that affect our business and I think each individual's spirituality - we share that with each other. That's what allows us to dig deep... To correct, to create."*

Regarding living out personal values at work: When asked about the experience of living one's personal values in a previous employment situation, one respondent said, *"The people I worked with before were good people but they couldn't bring out that spirituality in their own people."* Regarding definition of success: In response to customers or employees, it is not about employees selling or the customers buying more, but about being, *"loved by the people around me and living that life style of loving people and receiving it."* Many in this group spoke of fostering creativity, capabilities or interests. One entrepreneur states, *"God has given me a gift, a talent, a vision and it's my mission to use this gift to help humanity. I want to make others happy, to feel employable."*

Regarding what got them in business: These entrepreneurs truly love what they do and many gave up higher income jobs to fulfill personal goals. One respondent said that after the 9/11 tragedy, he could no longer work for *"the man"* and wanted to find something he, *"loved and that had meaning for him."*

Regarding sources of joy and sadness: They expressed enormous passion for work, even though some evidence of sadness emerged over little stressors such as the frequent long hours required. However, they looked *"forward to*

*coming to work," and spoke of being in the "flow" with a connection of mind, body and spirit. One entrepreneur's quote really summarized how many of this group felt: "My mission statement is to bring happiness to myself and others, to be the best example I can be so that I can inspire; to change lives and bring out the best in the people I touch - and, I think that's what I want them to remember."*

## **Modality 2: 'Soul Seekers'**

Just as the name implies, many of these individuals seem to be struggling with how or what it means to bring spirituality into work. The majority did find a connection between spirituality and/or religion and entrepreneurship. However, it was apparent through the interviews that 'soul seekers' were not fully integrating spirituality into their business. Only three entrepreneurs espoused spirituality without religion and many in this group were struggling with exactly what 'spirituality' meant to them. Seven participants related spirituality to religion. However, several issues created some doubt or concern which prevented the full integration of business with spiritual life. They were uncomfortable with the concept of 'spirituality and work' due to a belief that it would be pushing personal religious values on others. Some were struggling with how to connect spiritual life with work, or even what this meant. It was interesting that many in this group (both religious and/or spiritual) backed into a discussion of how they might be integrating their spiritual 'self' through work. Overall, they tended to use personal reflection and self motivation to express spirituality at work.

For 'Soul Seekers' financial security (not wealth creation) was mentioned frequently. It seemed to be more important in discussions of joy and sadness as well as reasons for starting the business. On the other hand, just like the 'Make me Whole,' internally motivated group, "work I love to do" was mentioned often in these same discussions. Some in this group stated that a source of sadness was "not putting all into the business." This could indicate a sense of awareness of failure to integrate the whole of the 'self' into work life. Passion for work was still evident but not at the level found in the 'Make me Whole' group. When exploring the similarities between these two modalities, recognition of a connection to spirituality and work was found along with some attempts to integrate business and personal selves. This group was similar to the 'Make me Whole' group concerning employees and customers. They were more interested in making a meaningful contribution instead of creating personal wealth. Overall, they just weren't as clear about how to integrate work and life. Financial security was mentioned more, however, demographics did not indicate, "more than or less than enough money to live on."

Representative responses regarding connection of spirituality and entrepreneurship included: *"When you own a business the best way and the surest way to be successful is to always take the high road. And, if there is a connection between taking the high road and spirituality, then there is a connection between spirituality and running a business."* Overall, these respondents were unsure about experiencing this connection in business, other than, *"as a way to reduce stress."* For another entrepreneur who connected spirituality with religion, when asked about integration of spirituality into work, the response was: *"I can't because of the laws."* He goes on to say, *"It helps me a lot to release all that pressure with God. But I have to do it on my own because it's hard to share."*

Regarding sources of joy and sadness: One entrepreneur was *"proud that my business is held in high esteem by the industry."* Financial security was found to be an important source of joy. For example, one entrepreneur states, *"I feel joy when I get enough money."* For another talking about work, *"I get to do something different everyday. I get to teach, I get to meet people, and I get to pay them."*

Regarding personal values: *'Soul Seekers'* often refer to how they are living out personal values at work, *"I believe my business makes a difference in the lives of other employees, I become disappointed fairly often when people I depend on do not live up to their potential or give their all."* Another entrepreneur listed his most important business values as *"sharing my wealth, being a hard worker and loyalty to employees."* One entrepreneur, who had not responded earlier to the spirituality and entrepreneurship question, said, *"well when you step back and reflect on what's going on - and your health, and family, and the areas of life that are important to you....maybe that's how you have spirituality in work."*

Regarding definition of success: Financial security does seem to be an issue for this group. A number of individuals included it in the definition of success. One states that a successful entrepreneur is, *"one that enjoys what he is doing and pays his bills on time."* Another said, *"it is about building a company to pass down to the family. Doing something I love and having a job that gives meaning and purpose to my life."* For another, *"the business is helping me to grow both materialistically and in my own personality."* For an entrepreneur and mother, *"being an entrepreneur provides me the opportunity to stay home with my children, while still loving what I am doing."*

### **Modality 3: 'Conflicting Goals' (Middle)**

The *'Conflicting Goals'* group lives on the battleground between external and

internal motivating factors. The differences at times may be subtle, yet there does seem to be a clear grouping in the middle with distinct aspects of both extreme modalities: the *'Make me Whole'* (internal) and *'Strictly Business'* (external) groups. Sometimes the conflict is within the aspects and sometimes it is evident between aspects. For example, a conflict within the aspect shows the entrepreneur perceiving a connection between spirituality and work and yet hesitating to integrate the two. The conflict between the aspects might show up as externally motivated factors (money) conflicted with a strong internal motivation (passion in excellence). The 'self' is in conflict and has not yet achieved a way to reconcile the various goals.

Respondents in the *'Conflicting Goals'* group perceive a connection between spirituality and entrepreneurship, but can't or won't express it for fear of alienating customers or staff; not even through the back door as the *'Soul Seekers'* seem to do. Connection to the spiritual or religious is seen as personal and private and segmented out of integration into work life. The *'Conflicting Goals'* group could not say enough about customers. The source of joy for this group seems to come predominantly from customers. Throughout the interviews customer satisfaction kept appearing as the source of happiness. However, helping the customer seemed to be less about doing the right thing and more about the customer returning to buy again. A customer's positive perception of the entrepreneur is the basis for their business achievement. On the other hand, sources of disappointment are centered on fear of failure and might indicate lack of self esteem.

Improving processes or speeding operations derive from self reflection rather than sources of external motivation. Personal values are based on responsibility, dedication and hard work. They feel joy from constituent's achievements and stand by their word even in the face of great expense. Typical *'Conflicting Goals'* responses regarding motives to start the business: The group fit into three main segments: entrepreneurs who delayed startup until they were financially stable enough, those who had strong family entrepreneurial backgrounds, and those driven by external factors such as termination, lay-off or divorce. When external factors forced delays, they expressed passion for the business upon achieving the breakthrough. Entrepreneurs from entrepreneurial families were not as passionate about the business. They were there to make money, but expressed that, *"I could not work for anyone else."* Their definition of success centered on one of two ideals: financial security and working hard to provide for families, or pursuing personal passions in work. Work and spiritual life are again separate and not perceived as a whole.

Regarding integration of spirituality and entrepreneurship: One entrepreneur stated, *"You have to lift yourself up and let your inner 'self' guide you in*

*your decisions. This may or may not be business related, but nonetheless it is important."* However, there is a hesitancy to impose personal beliefs on others, *"I think that my spirituality is very personal to me. I'm not one that likes to give my opinion, if you ask me if I believe in God, I believe in the afterlife. I believe that living a good life will give you a good afterlife but that's my belief. That's what I believe and I don't push it on people, you know. I don't walk around with a Bible and tell people to live right, that's just how I am."*

Regarding sources of joy and sadness: Joy revolves around constituents, *"I'm helping my investors secure some long term financial freedom."* Put another way, *"Overall people feel good about what we give them here. When they feel good, we know we've done a good job. When they're satisfied."* Regarding personal values: One respondent stated, *"I don't know if this is necessarily a value but this is something that I think I bring to my business. It is what keeps people referring business, continually referring business to my company or to me; is that I'm very passionate about what I do and I think people see that and they can hear the excitement in my voice sometimes. . . .treating people the way you want to be treated, going above and beyond, following through on your word, whatever you say is what you do, I mean whatever we say as a business we're going to do, we're going to do. I don't care if it costs us money."*

Regarding motivation to start the business: *"When I had my first son, I realized that I wanted to do good things, and I wanted to be able to provide better things for him."*

Regarding definition of success: This 'central' group seeks both internal and external motivators for success. A key uniqueness seems to be the challenge of integrating both sides. One entrepreneur summed up the dichotomy, *"I think there are two ways to define it. One is people who have achieved monetary success and can support themselves, and the other is the person who may have not achieved that, but may have achieved gratification by building something and completing something and following his dream."* The external extremes of the modalities model are represented by the 'Mostly Business' and 'Strictly Business' groups. While both of these groupings share a great deal of commonality significant distinctions exists.

#### **Modality 4: 'Mostly Business'**

There were three main differences between this group, 'Mostly Business,' and the external 'Strictly Business.' Those within the 'Mostly Business' modality were more likely to perceive a connection between entrepreneurship and spirituality and integrate (to a very limited extent)

personal, spiritual, and business lives. Second, while both groups defined success as wealth creation, the *'Mostly Business'* respondents were more likely to recognize that there could be more to being an entrepreneur than making a lot of money. Many of these individuals were in the unique situation of having work they genuinely enjoyed that also provided them with expected wealth. However, most respondents in this group gave the impression that they would discontinue the work or business if it stopped being lucrative. The third distinction was that *'Mostly Business'* respondents showed small signs of internal motivation, such as displaying a genuine concern for employees and commitment to the community.

Typical responses for the *'Mostly Business'* modality regarding connection between spirituality and entrepreneurship: Those within the *'Mostly Business'* modality were more likely to practice some form of spirituality when compared to the more externally focused *'Strictly Business'* modality. When asked to communicate her definition of spirituality one respondent expressed the following, *"Spiritual? God, I believe in heaven, and I believe in hell."* When asked whether she believed there to be a connection between spirituality and entrepreneurship, *"Well yes I do, I believe in God and I believe in his power, and I believe in his help, and if he helps me today he will help me tomorrow."* When asked if and how she integrates spirituality into her business she responded, *"I [pray to] him asking him to give me power, and to make me more. . . to believe; to bring me more business."* Regarding source of joy and sadness: In both *'Mostly Business'* and *Strictly Business'* groups, instances of joy and sadness were heavily dependent upon financial status and performance of functions related to profitability, such as customer service. One respondent stated it in the following manner, *"I'm enjoying at the highest level very often. I fulfill my duty when I provide the best service I can and because I also am getting a lot of customers. A lot of people know us and bring us a lot of customers and that gives us more business and more business means more money and more money mean[s] more success."*

Regarding personal values: *'Mostly Business'* respondents expressed a strong desire to behave ethically because to act otherwise could jeopardize the business. The overall sentiment of this group is illustrated by, *"Honesty? There is a lot of [it,] especially dealing with the people that I deal with. Products often are not up to par or not as presented and I'm not going to put out a defective or misrepresented product to my consumers."*

Regarding motivation to start the business: The decision to start a business was typically brought about by external forces. Even among the entrepreneurs that enjoyed the work, there were strong indications that joy alone would not keep them in business, *"I wanted to be able to eat and feed*

*my kids (laughs) with our type of business and the way we were starting it up. I was able to run it from home, and still be able to be a full time mom and a full time businessperson at the same time. That was a good incentive for me, to be able to run it from home, and stay with the kids."*

Regarding definition of success: Unlike the 'Strictly Business' modality which saw success solely along monetary lines, those within the 'Mostly Business' grouping typically equated success with monetary wealth but were able to conceptualize that success could be defined in non-monetary terms: "*[The definition of success] depends on the purpose. You become an entrepreneur to be happy, well then are you happy. If you become an entrepreneur to make a lot of money, are you making a lot of money? So far, I have accomplished my purpose. I've become an entrepreneur to pay for school and to pay for life. Basically I'm not doing so bad and I'm enjoying myself"*

### **Modality 5: 'Strictly Business' (External Motivation)**

This modality was extremely likely to keep business and personal life completely separate. They generally did not believe there was a connection between spirituality and entrepreneurship. Like the other modalities, primary personal values were focused on being honest and following the 'golden rule.' However, the basis for conducting business in such a manner was based on the belief that to act otherwise would negatively affect business. 'Strictly Business' respondents had a strong desire to be their own boss. Many were certain that they could not be happy working for someone else and that they started the business in part to obtain a greater sense of freedom and independence.

Personal motivation, joy and sadness were all derived from external sources, particularly those related to financial rewards, such as providing good customer service and successfully completing projects. Many expressed feelings of not enjoying their work – enduring only because of all that money provided. Those that expressed feelings of enjoyment in their work were most proud of externally related successes (e.g. having lots of customers/projects; being able to afford expensive things, etc.). This group largely viewed success as making a lot of money (wealth creation). Most stated that personal income level was more than adequate and perceived themselves successful. Utilizing the business for personal growth or providing employees with growth opportunities were of little importance. They typically viewed the venture as providing a means to one end – wealth creation.

Typical responses for the 'Strictly Business' modality regarding connection between spirituality and entrepreneurship: A large segment of 'Strictly

*Business'* respondents did not consider themselves to be spiritual. Those that did made no connection between spirituality and entrepreneurship. When asked a series of questions about connections between spirituality and entrepreneurship, several respondents were clear and brief with negative comments such as, "No, not to me." and "Not very important!" When asked if it was possible to integrate spirituality into work with a prior employer, one respondent stated emphatically, "No, not unless you work for a church!"

Regarding sources of joy and sadness: Feelings of joy and sadness were a derivative of financial successes and failures. One received a strong sense of connection between joy and profitability, and conversely between sadness and factors associated with financial loss (e.g. losing customers). This sentiment was evident in the response to questions about feeling joy, fulfillment or reward from business: "Because, uh, if I have a lot of business, a lot of customers I know [I'm going to] have money to do whatever I want to do. And, the reward is when people are coming [in] the restaurant and tell me the food is good, and they appreciate the food and my work. So, that is my reward." A response to feeling disappointed, "When there [are] not enough customers and I prepare a lot of food and I cannot sell it."

Regarding personal values: 'Strictly Business' respondents' virtuous behavior derived from the drive to attain or sustain financial success. This distinction is illustrated by the following remarks about values: "Honesty? I think is the bottom line. . . So, basically the more honest you are. . .the more apt you are to make it. If you're dishonest you're just the opposite. . . One way or another, it might get you by for awhile but after awhile. . . After awhile the whole thing comes in on you. What goes around comes around."

Regarding motivation to start the business, they were predominately motivated to start a business because of a deep desire for independence. Those that held positions in other companies prior to becoming entrepreneurs generally expressed dissatisfaction working for someone else. One respondent stated, "For a very short time after I graduated, I worked for a company, and I hated it. So, I figured I could be a better boss than what I had."

Regarding definition of success: success was commonly associated with wealth, particularly money. Providing good customer service was viewed as being a necessary step on the path to creating wealth. Many also defined success as treating customers well. The following was common, "A successful person has to make a lot of money, [know] how to treat people, mainly know how to treat people right."

## **Conclusions**

While the authors' exploration was informed by the existing body of entrepreneurial research, an innovative perspective guided the overall research approach. An examination of spiritual factors provides the key distinction between this modality model and others found in both spirituality at work and entrepreneurship. Historically, models that attempt to explain the entrepreneurship phenomenon have ignored spiritual aspects of human behavior and have instead concentrated on personality traits, intentions, behavioral processes, and external contexts. The authors designated the spiritual component of the human experience as the focal point of this exploration and as a result, new knowledge emerged.

An examination of entrepreneurs' integration of spirituality and work provides a better understanding of relationships with employees, customers, and the greater community. It demonstrates a very different perspective as to why individuals experience and behave in very different and unique ways at work. This research has enhanced the understanding of factors that differentiate entrepreneurs based on spiritual aspects that motivate them to start and sustain businesses beyond traits, behaviors, intentions, and context. It has examined entrepreneurs' relationship between spirituality and work. Information from entrepreneurs has been presented that enhances the definition of success, demonstrates specific reasons for creating a business, and illustrates joy, sadness and happiness. Entrepreneurs have special and unique ways of expressing feelings of success, joy, happiness, heartbreak, reactions to other people and to money. The 'spirit' is significant in these human reactions. These spiritual aspects when integrated into the entrepreneurship literature provide a clearer picture of how and why entrepreneurs are different. This model may help to explain why recent research on push/pull (Schjoedt & Shaver, 2007) could not confirm 'pull' factors and found evidence against 'push' factors. The 'soul' is simply missing.

## **Future Research**

This research is only the beginning of work needing to be done. The model has left many questions. For example, as an individual evolves through their own spiritual path does the business evolve with them? Do the employees and customers have different experiences when working with entrepreneurs who have integrated spirituality into work? Or, on the other side, has this integration of spirituality and work created individuals whose passion becomes all encompassing? Are entrepreneurs who live out personal values more or less likely to allow their employees to do the same? Does this change the way work is being done? What impact does this integration provide for the community? Economically, which entrepreneurs are more successful – those that are internally or externally motivated? Other than

money, what should we use as the measurement of success? Are there significant behavioral differences between the integration practices of entrepreneurs with a religion-based form of spirituality and those that live a spiritual life free of religious doctrine?

The differentiating results presented here are based on a qualitative approach. Could similar results be achieved by substantially increasing the sample size and implementing more quantitative research tools? By taking a meaningful examination of spirituality in the context of entrepreneurship a heightened level of awareness of the intentions and desires of entrepreneurs has materialized, but along with this new knowledge came an explosion of additional questions. The journey to truly understand the impact of spirituality and entrepreneurship has only just begun.

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