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An Integrative Review of Critical Spirituality[**]

Abstract

As spirituality provides people with meaning in life and informs their sense of values and ethics, there is increasing interest among management scholars concerning this research field. People are characterised by an innate need to find meaning in their lives and work. Consequently, management theory and practice are challenged to address such topics. One controversy is the discussion of what kind of spirituality is debated in management theory and practice. The majority of publications emphasise the positive consequences of spirituality, thereby considering it as a management tool for improving the performance of employees and organisations. By contrast, critical approaches to spirituality focus on a serious debate about the meaning of life and work, including a critical analysis of organisations and managerial practices. Although research on critical spirituality spans a range of diverse disciplines, an interdisciplinary systematic analysis is still missing. This systematic review aims to present an overview of critical spirituality by integrating knowledge from diverse disciplines. It contributes to the management discourse by providing an understanding of spirituality beyond traditional management perspectives with a synthesised overview of the most influential theoretical foundations and key themes of critical spirituality as well as a framework of implications for management theory and practice.

1 Introduction

Management theory and practice refer to spirituality using the terms "*spirituality at work*" or "*workplace spirituality*". Spirituality at work is considered a fast-growing research area. Since the 1990s increasing publications have been recognisable, and in 2000, the Academy of Management founded a special interest group for Management, Spirituality and Religion (Bell & Taylor, 2003; Benefiel, 2003b; Benefiel et al., 2014; Long & Driscoll, 2015; McKee et al., 2008; Neal & Biberman,

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2003). This interest in spirituality can be explained by recent economic changes, demographic developments, and religious trends. Moreover, workplace changes have influenced working conditions and the daily lives of employees. The search for spirituality can be regarded as a reaction to uncertainty due to the insecure workplaces and life conditions resulting from companies' decisions to downsize, merge, and restructure (Benefiel et al., 2014; Hicks, 2003; McKee et al., 2008; Miller, 2007). Additionally, spirituality, which encourages wholeness and provides ethics and community to the workplace, is presented as a remedy to all the grievances of management and contemporary capitalism (Agbim et al., 2013; Brown, 2003; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009).

The topic of spirituality at work has been examined by different research areas as well as scientists from diverse academic backgrounds. Gotsis and Kortezi (2008) distinguish between frameworks which reflect the contexts of philosophical backgrounds and religious traditions and conceptions, which prioritise the prospected outcomes of spirituality in workplaces. Therefore, spirituality at work implies instrumental connotations. In the context of its instrumental handling, spirituality is misused to motivate employees to show higher levels of identification with and commitment to the organisation to raise their performance (Bell & Taylor, 2003; Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009; Tackney et al., 2017). The majority of management research has been preoccupied with the study of positive outcomes, presenting spirituality at work as a win/win situation, namely, helpful for employees and advantageous for organisations (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Fry & Slocum, 2008; Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Milliman et al., 2003; Poole, 2009; Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2008). This instrumental perspective is problematic when employees are viewed merely as a means to achieve higher organisational outcomes or when spirituality is promoted as a panacea for all organisational problems (Brown, 2003; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009). Therefore, critical scholars highlight the pitfalls of management research and practice relating spirituality to performance because the former, when misused as a management tool, loses its authenticity and essence (Brown, 2003; Cavanagh & Bandsuch, 2002; Dent et al., 2005; Gibbons, 2000; Karakas, 2010).

Critical scholars cogitate instrumental concepts as reductionist and characterise them as "*technical spirituality*" because spirituality is used as a management technique. Although the empowerment of people is emphasised, it seems to be encouraged primarily to improve results and only secondarily in the interest of the person concerned. Critical voices focus on how spirituality can be exploited for managerial control and criticise the preponderance of the perspective of business leaders and managers in this discourse (Benefiel, 2003a; Brown, 2003; Driver, 2005; Fernando, 2005; Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2014; Long & Driscoll, 2015). By contrast, *critical spirituality* offers a serious debate about the meaning of life and work and leads to a critical analysis of organisations, managerial practices and power to illustrate the limitations of contemporary capitalism (Bell, 2005, 2008). The distinction

between positive and critical approaches is based on Lips-Wiersma et al. (2009) and Lips-Wiersma & Mills (2014). Critical spirituality is regarded as a profoundly different approach to management and strategic purposes of companies (Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007). The terms "authentic spirituality" and "existential workplace spirituality" are also found in some papers (Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007; Fernando, 2005; Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2014; Porth et al., 2003; Rousseau, 2009; Wolf & Feldbauer-Durstmüller, 2018), but are less applied within these debates. In the remainder of this paper, the term "critical spirituality" is used.

Increasing diversity and a perceived paradigm shift can be mentioned as possible indications for the relevance of this paper. In Europe, diverse spiritual and religious perspectives have become a crucial issue due to increased migration and a new generation of the workforce (Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013; Zolfaghari et al., 2016). Moreover, a number of researchers have pronounced a *paradigm shift* (Case & Gosling, 2010; Giacalone & Eylon, 2000; Harman & Hormann, 1990; Karakas, 2010; Ray & Rinzler, 1993; Williams, 2011) whereby paradigms are regarded as shared, global views of a scientific community (Kuhn, 1970; Lauden, 1977). This paradigm shift is characterised, among other things, as a change from self-interest to stewardship, from self-centeredness to interconnectedness and from a materialistic to a spiritual orientation (Block, 1993; Dehler & Welsh, 1994; Karakas, 2010; Neck & Milliman, 1994; Walsh et al., 2003). If a spiritual orientation is discussed as a new paradigm, there is a requirement to scrutinise the implications for management theory and practice.

While reviews of spirituality exist from the entrepreneurship perspective (Balog et al., 2014), in the healthcare area (Clarke, 2006; Dyson et al., 1997) and in connection with performance (Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Karakas, 2010; Poole, 2009) and leadership (Dent et al., 2005), a specific review of critical spirituality is lacking in the literature. Research on critical spirituality spans a range of diverse disciplines (Fernando, 2007), such as management, healthcare, pedagogy, theology and philosophy. Thus, we decided to conduct an interdisciplinary systematic literature review to provide an integrative overview of critical spirituality. To broaden the body of knowledge on this topic, it focuses on critical spirituality in the management literature as well as includes sources from other disciplines. This paper thus offers the following contributions. First, it contributes to management discourse with an analysis of the critical literature, particularly explaining its most influential theoretical foundations, synthesising the key themes of critical spirituality and outlining implications for management theory and practice. Second, it enhances the prevailing literature on spirituality at work by providing an understanding of spirituality beyond traditional management perspectives. Third, this review is also valuable for management practice, as it offers a basis for critically reflecting on one's own managerial practices.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. In the next sections, the basic terminology is offered, and the methodology applied is described. The following sections then analyse and synthesise the theoretical foundations and key themes of critical spirituality and outline implications for management theory and practice. The last section provides conclusions, the limitations of the paper and avenues for further research.

2 Terminology

1.1 Spirituality

As spirituality is a multifaceted construct that is inherently abstract and highly personal, a universally acknowledged definition of spirituality is hard to attain. Nevertheless, several definitions offer the following recurrent keywords: *search for meaning, interconnectedness, transcendence* and *innerness* (Ashforth & Pratt, 2003; Cavanagh & Bandsuch, 2002; Cobb et al., 2012; Emmons, 1999, 2000; Gardner, 2013; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008; Helminiak, 2006; McGhee & Grant, 2017; Sass, 2000).

Frankl (1963) argues that people have an innate need to find *meaning* in their lives. Given the lack of a common meaning appropriate for everyone, each individual discovers meaning in his or her own life (Battista & Almond, 1973; Frankl, 1963). Spirituality implies not only the way people seek meaning but also the experience of interconnectedness (Cobb et al., 2012). Such *interconnectedness* possesses vertical and horizontal components. While the horizontal component comprises the relation with the self, others and the environment, the vertical one can refer to "a higher power, God or the sacred" or "self-chosen significant values or goals" (Cavanagh & Bandsuch, 2002; Cobb et al., 2012; Dyson et al., 1997; Elkins et al., 1988; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010; Stoll, 1989). In this context, values can be defined as central beliefs or ideals guiding the choice and evaluation of decisions and conduct (Argandoña, 2003; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). These significant values or goals meet ultimate concerns and transcend the self (Clarke, 2006; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). *Transcendence* can be defined as the ability of people to stay outside their current sense of time and place to regard life from a larger, more detached perspective (Piedmont, 1999). *Innerness* lets people develop an authentic self, which allows them to lead a life with integrity that is congruent with their personal values (Driver, 2005; McGhee & Grant, 2017).

Spirituality may or may not be associated with religion. Consequently, the discussion on the relationship between religion and spirituality is ongoing in this research field (Cavanagh, 2003; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008; Hill et al., 2000; Phipps & Benefiel, 2013). Conceding that defining religion is one of the most comprehensive tasks (Horton, 1960; Van Buren et al., 2020), a broad definition considers religion as an organised approach to supernatural reality through human activities, comprehending a range of narratives, beliefs and practices that are most spiritual (de Blot,

2011). With the decline of traditional religious institutions and the increase in individualised forms of expression of faith, spirituality has developed as an independent concept (Hill et al., 2000). This paper follows Phipps and Benefiel (2013), who scrutinise all possible juxtapositions of spirituality and religion and propose regarding them as overlapping constructs. These constructs are described as separate fields with some shared content concerning, i.e. transcendence aspirations or abilities, experiences of connectedness, and preoccupation with existential questions (Hill et al., 2000).

1.2 Spirituality at Work

There is the question if work is the right place to practice spirituality (Polley et al., 2005) and whether spirituality at work is something real which has to be discussed. This confusion emerges from equating real entities with material entities and non-material entities with non-real entities. God, a higher power, something sacred or ultimate concerns may or may not be real, but their ideas of them are real, as they make a difference in people's actions and influences their behaviour and motivation in the workplace (McGhee & Grant, 2008; Tillich, 2011).

The absence of a commonly accepted definition of spirituality impedes achieving a shared understanding of spirituality at work (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010; Sass, 2000). Gotsis and Kortezi (2008) describe spirituality at work as an experience of personal completeness, transcendence and interconnectedness. As employees are not mere task executors but "whole persons" bringing their physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual characteristics to work, this phenomenon explains their spiritual or religious experiences and manifestations in the workplace (Hicks, 2003; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Sheep, 2006). Spirituality at work encompasses all levels of organisations (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008): At the *individual* level, it refers to meaningful work, at the *group level,* to a sense of community and at the *organisational* level, it is linked to the values of the organisation (Houghton et al., 2016; Milliman et al., 2003).

At the *individual* level, work provides personal meaning for employees. The topic of "meaningful work" is not new (Chalofsky, 2003); however, the spiritual perspective focuses on the search for a deeper meaning, living one's dream and expressing one's life needs in workplaces. According to Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009), meaningful work is based on (1) developing and becoming self by personal growth and staying true to oneself; (2) expressing oneself and one's full potential; (3) showing unity with others by sharing values, belonging and working together and (4) serving others. Here, there is a direct link with community at the *group level*, comprising a deep connection to others, including support and sincere caring, as well as the feeling of being linked by a common purpose (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Klinger, 1998; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Milliman et al., 2003). Spirituality at work at the *organisational* level comprises alignment between the personal values of

employees and the values and purpose of the organisation, where the purpose is considered as the enduring reason for an organisation to exist (Ebert et al., 2018). In this context, alignment is achieved through an interactional relationship between employees' and organisational values based on the idea that individuals want to work in organisations with a purpose that is meaningful beyond merely earning profits (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Ghadi et al., 2013; Milliman et al., 2003; Pratt & Ashfort, 2003).

3 Methodology

Research on critical spirituality spans a range of diverse disciplines. However, to highlight the breadth of critical spirituality, we focused on articles not only published in journals central to management scholars but also included literature from other disciplines, including healthcare, pedagogy, theology and philosophy. To identify and synthesise the relevant literature, we searched the following scientific databases: EBSCO, ISI Web of Science, ProQuest, Scopus Wiley and Emerald. The terms "*critical spirituality*", "*authentic spirituality*", and "*technical spirituality*" were adopted as keywords. The keywords for the literature search were chosen to cover the core concept of "critical spirituality" but also to include closely related topics that study comparable phenomena. As some articles used the terms "technical spirituality" and "authentic spirituality", we wanted to ensure a comprehensive literature search using these three keywords. In total, we found 149 articles. We excluded book reviews, editor's introductions or proceedings if they were later published as journal articles. Moreover, articles with special topics such as spiritual assessment in nursing, psychotherapeutic practice, case studies in elementary schools, leadership and social justice practices of Black men, descriptions of personal spiritual journeys or religious experiences were removed from the sample. In addition, relevant articles in the bibliographies of already found sources were collected in a reference list. Table 1 presents an overview of the search process.

No restrictions in terms of the ranking of journals and the date of publication were made. As this is an interdisciplinary review, we also included books and book chapters because this publication form still remains relevant for other scientific disciplines. Overall, we found 31 sources dealing with critical approaches to spirituality. Appendix 1 indicates more information on these articles.

To integrate and synthesise the different approaches in the sample, we first analysed the theoretical foundations that have informed research in this area. Next, we clustered the review findings by focusing on the key themes within these critical approaches. For this synthesised overview of the reviewed articles, we read the articles several times, extracted the main statements of each article and identified different categories, which were subsequently discussed and harmonised. The articles could be assigned to multiple categories, and ultimately this process resulted in four clusters of key themes. Finally, we provided potential implications for management

theory and practice, which may lay the foundation for future research. Figure 1 provides an overview of the methodology.

Table 1. Overview of Methodology

Phase	Database	Keyword-based hits	Removed	Duplicates	Sample
Database analysis	**Authentic Spirituality**				
	Overall	**82**	**-71**	**-6**	**5**
	EBSCOhost	23	-21	0	2
	ISI Web of Science	1	-1	0	0
	Pro Quest	6	-3	-2	1
	Scopus	23	-17	-4	2
	Wiley	23	-23	0	0
	Emerald	6	-6	0	0
	Critical Spirituality				
	Overall	**57**	**-39**	**-9**	**9**
	EBSCO	25	-22	0	3
	ISI Web of Science	6	-4	-1	1
	Pro Quest	3	0	-3	0
	Scopus	20	-11	-4	5
	Wiley	0	0	0	0
	Emerald	3	-2	-1	0
	Technical Spirituality				
	Overall	**10**	**-3**	**-5**	**2**
	EBSCO	4	-2	0	2
	ISI Web of Science	1	0	-1	0
	Pro Quest	2	0	-2	0
	Scopus	3	-1	-2	0
	Wiley	0	0	0	0
	Emerald	0	0	0	0
	Overall of all 3 searches	149	-113	-20	16
	Duplicates between keywords			-2	**-2**
Reference Analysis					17
Total					31

Figure 1. Analysis of Critical Spirituality
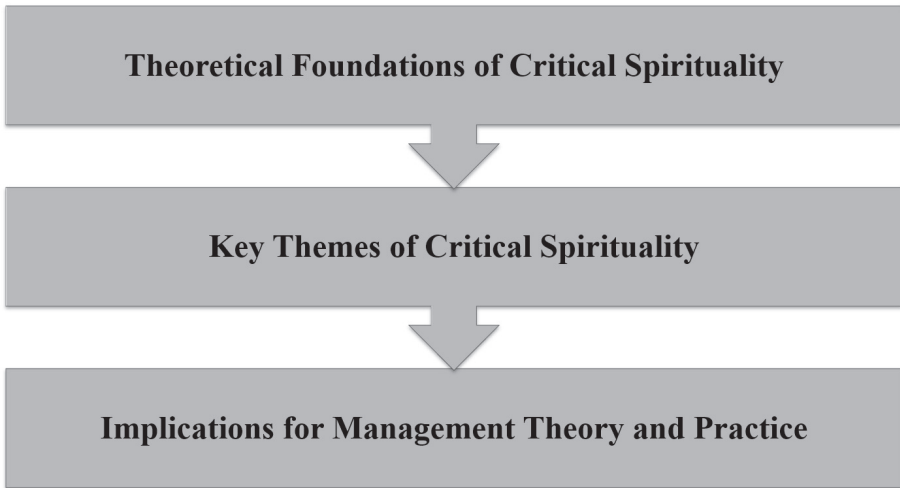
In the following analysis of critical spirituality, we use references beyond our review sample in the foundations and implications when further explanation is required from foundational works or connection with the current management literature.
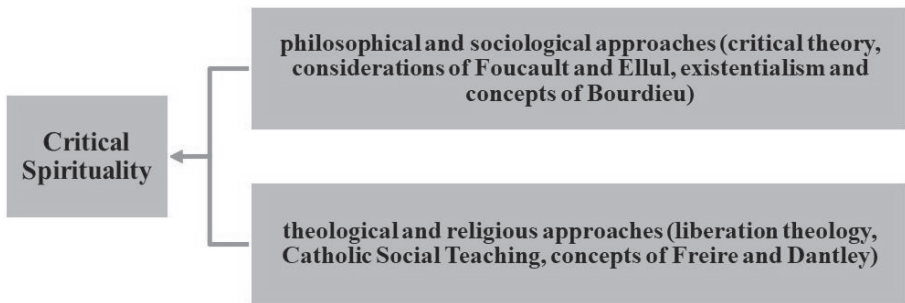
4 Analysis of Critical Spirituality

1.3 Theoretical Foundations of Critical Spirituality

Various streams of research on critical spirituality have emerged, each with different emphases and underlying assumptions. In this section, we introduce the most influential theoretical foundations identified in our review. We do not present each theoretical foundation in detail. Primarily, we concentrate on the aspects explained by the authors when discussing these theories, and occasionally we refer to the original references beyond our sample when further explanation is indispensable. Bearing in mind the terms used in the definition of spirituality (meaning, interconnectedness, transcendence, innerness), complex philosophical, sociological and theological issues are raised. Consequently, the critical articles in our review are based on several philosophical foundations: *critical theory* (e.g. Adorno and Horkheimer) (Boje, 2005, 2008; Bussey, 2006; Dantley, 2005), the considerations of *Foucault* regarding critique (Bell & Taylor, 2003; Langenberg, 2011), the technical imperative of Jacques *Ellul* (Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007) and *existentialism* (e.g. Heidegger, Kierkegaard and Sartre) (Houghton et al., 2016; Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2014). Moreover, sociological concepts such as the critical sociology of *Bourdieu* (Kamoche & Pinnington, 2012) are addressed. Theological approaches such as the *liberation theology* of Gutiérrez (Bell, 2005, 2008) and *Catholic Social Teaching* (Porth et al., 2003) are applied. Furthermore, other concepts, such as the critical spirituality

of Paulo Freire (Boyd, 2012) and Michael Dantley (2005), as well as notions of human dignity and equality, are discussed (Case & Gosling, 2010; Hicks, 2003). Figure 2 provides an overview of these theoretical foundations.

Figure 2. Theoretical Foundations of Critical Spirituality

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                    ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  philosophical and sociological approaches   │
                    │  (critical theory, considerations of         │
                    │  Foucault and Ellul, existentialism and      │
                    │  concepts of Bourdieu)                       │
                    └──────────────────────────────────────────────┘
  ┌──────────────┐
  │  Critical    │
  │ Spirituality │ ◄──
  └──────────────┘
                    ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  theological and religious approaches        │
                    │  (liberation theology, Catholic Social       │
                    │  Teaching, concepts of Freire and Dantley)   │
                    └──────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Critical theory can be differentiated from traditional theories because it aims to explicate all the circumstances that enslave human beings (Horkheimer, 1982). This theory aims to develop a critical perspective in the discussion of social practices (Held, 1980; Steffy & Grimes, 1986). As critical theory is sceptical of capitalism, critical spirituality is considered an inquiry into global capitalism and managerialism. Managerialism means focusing on the manager's perception while marginalising other perspectives in organisations (Boje, 2008). Further foundations are based on *Foucault's* notion of critique, which he interprets as a rupture from the existing and prevailing order. As critique is an examination of boundaries and already contains the foundation for change, it is essential for any transformation and creation of other societies, companies and worldviews (Foucault, 1997; Langenberg, 2011). Critique, which includes self-critique as well as system critique, is a prerequisite for critical spirituality (Langenberg, 2011).

The technical imperative of *Ellul* criticises "technique" as a dominating process in our lives that is attached to facts and results. Technique rules all domains of life, considering people as objects used to serve certain ends. Critical authors assert that the spirituality at work movement has not avoided the infiltration of technique, as spirituality is used as a new management technique to improve results (Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007). Some approaches refer to *existentialism* because this philosophy calls for one to become what one is and emphasises the importance of choosing to be one's own in a society full of alternatives (Heidegger, 1962; Kierkegaard, 1983; Lehman et al., 2019; Sartre, 1943). Spirituality as the self's authentic expression

comprises the necessity of creating one's own future (Dantley, 2005; Heidegger, 1962).

Referring to the critical sociology of *Bourdieu*, the concepts of symbolic violence and cultural arbitrary are applied. Symbolic violence is described as an invisible form of violence trying to legitimise dominant social relations. It is characteristic of discourses that simultaneously reproduce and conceal power asymmetries and hierarchies. The cultural arbitrary represents dominant social expectations and occurs under the arbitrary implementation of desirable norms, values and beliefs in organisations. In workplaces, symbolic violence manifests itself in the cultural arbitrary of managerial power, and it functions via mechanisms of social control (Bourdieu, 1977; Kamoche & Pinnington, 2012). Kamoche and Pinnington (2012) criticise spirituality at work, which involves the inculcation of values through managers and business leaders by simultaneously establishing and denying power asymmetries and hierarchies.

Concerning theological approaches, critical voices refer to liberation theology and Catholic Social Teaching (Bell, 2005, 2008; Porth et al., 2003). *Liberation theology* is defined as a theology intended to make a difference in the world through solidarity and action. This theology has a clear option for the poor and provides a source for critical spirituality by drawing attention to structural inequalities (Gutiérrez, 1973, 1999). The principles of the *Catholic Social Teaching* of human dignity, equality, solidarity and subsidiarity reflect the Catholic Church's view on socioeconomic issues. The Catholic Church guards against overlooking the spiritual dimensions of work as well as the economic, social and environmental responsibility of companies (Melé, 2011; Pope Benedict XVI, 2009; Pope John Paul II, 1991; Porth et al., 2003; Reed, 1995; Tackney & Shah, 2017). Regarding other religious concepts, *Freire and Dantley* prefer a type of spirituality that is actively engaged in the world and that opposes dehumanising systems. This critical spirituality works towards a more human future (Boyd, 2012; Dantley, 2005). Other authors refer to the ideas of human dignity and equality as two core concepts (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008; Hicks, 2003).

1.4 Key Themes of Critical Spirituality

The synthesised analysis of the reviewed articles resulted in four main clusters, which are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Key Themes of Critical Spirituality

CATEGORY	CRITICAL SPIRITUALITY...	SUPPORTING ARTICLE(S)
POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT	■ involves a concern about the exterior, political and social aspects in addition to a preoccupation with the interior search for meaning	Bell, 2005, 2007, 2008
	■ places spirituality in its social, economic and historical contingency	Boje, 2005, 2008
	■ is not simply inward and private but also actively engaged in the needs and issues of the world	Boyd, 2012
	■ integrates the concerns of critical theory for social justice, equity and the processes of legitimation	Bussey, 2002, 2006
	■ discusses the moral structures of politics and the economy, distributive justice and ecological sustainability	Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007
	■ recognises the influence of the context, particularly history and culture, on spiritual and religious experiences	Gardner, 2013, 2016
VALUES AND PURPOSES OF ORGANISATIONS	■ opposes the values of a dominant managerial culture and employs the values of empathy and social justice to challenge the prevailing schools of thought of management and organisation	Bell, 2005, 2007, 2008
	■ emphasises that profit is not a purpose but a goal of companies and raises the question "who does the business really benefit"	Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007
	■ has an ethical dimension as confronted with questions of how to act and for what purpose	Dantley, 2005
	■ places people before profits	Kamoche & Pinnington, 2012
	■ attempts to pursue an ideal higher purpose within the practical constraints of an organisational context	Lips-Wiersma & Nilakant, 2008
	■ offers the opportunity to unite people around the values of humanity and equality	Long & Helms Mills, 2010
DIFFERENT CONCEPTION OF HUMAN BEINGS	■ leads to a vision of organisations in which the spiritual growth of human beings can be accomplished	Bell & Taylor, 2003
	■ means seeing people holistically, seeking to understand where they are coming from and what matters to them at a fundamental level	Gardner, 2013, 2016
	■ is premised on a different conception of human beings based on dignity and equality	Hicks, 2002, 2003
	■ reminds us that people are not made up of different parts with the task of finding and working on "the spiritual part", but rather ask themselves who they really are and what life is about	Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2014
	■ is based on a concern about others and on a deep commitment to the human equality, dignity and flourishing of the whole person	Porth et al., 2003
	■ respects the whole person and dignity of each person and is visible by how organisations treat the people with whom they interact	
ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO MANAGEMENT	■ regards spirituality as a force of resistance to overcome the processes of social domination by challenging established managerial practices	Bell, 2005, 2007, 2008
	■ transforms management, as spirituality is not a technique that managers must learn but would mean a fundamentally different approach to management	Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007
	■ may result in an elevated social consciousness necessary to reconstruct workplaces, thereby challenging the structural inequalities and exploitive tendencies produced by managerial practices	Long & Helms Mills, 2010
	■ challenges management by emphasising critique, moral reflection and receptiveness to otherness	Langenberg, 2011
	■ promotes the management of a different sort and transforms the very nature of management	Porth et al., 2003
	■ changes our understanding of management and leads to a concept of management based on a deep commitment to respect the value and inherent dignity of the individual	

As the philosophical and religious theoretical foundations selected by authors are critical of capitalism, prevailing social relations and power hierarchies, there is

intense debate about the political, social and economic context of management in the reviewed literature (Bell, 2005, 2008; Bell & Taylor, 2003; Boje, 2008; Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009). Bell (2005, 2007, 2008) emphasises that in addition to the preoccupation with the interior search for meaning, critical spirituality always has exterior aspects. This spirituality is not only inward-oriented but also actively engaged in global issues of the world (Boyd, 2012). It addresses the issues of power and systematic difficulties, which may prevent the development of more humanistic workplaces and the fulfilment of worldly demands connected with employment and job security (Bell, 2005, 2008; Kamoche & Pinnington, 2012; Langenberg, 2011). Consequently, critical spirituality recognises the influence of the political, social and economic context (Gardner, 2013, 2016; Boje, 2005, 2008) and discusses such topics as distributive justice, equity and the moral structures of politics and the economy (Bussey, 2002, 2006; Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007).
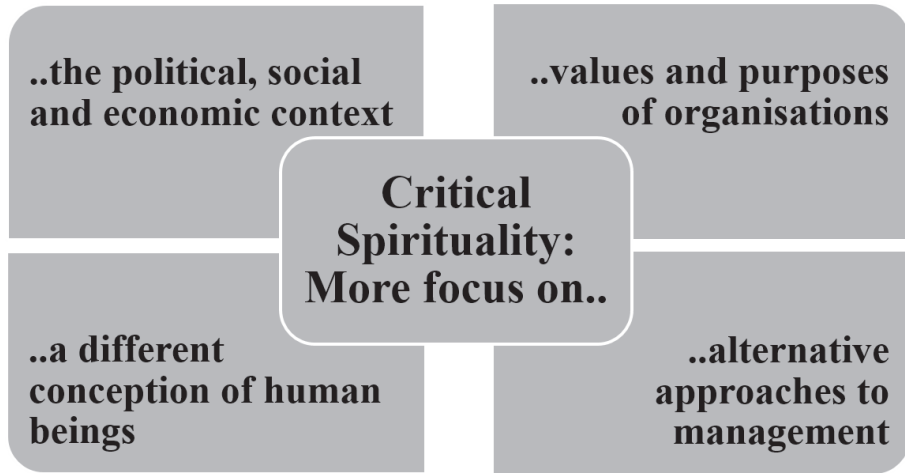
Critical approaches to spirituality debate how to act and for what purpose (Boje, 2008; Dantley, 2005; Lips-Wiersma & Nilakant, 2008) and highlights that profit is not a purpose of organisations but rather a goal (Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007). This type of spirituality offers the opportunity to debate values such as humanity, equality, empathy and social justice in depth (Bell, 2005, 2007, 2008; Lips-Wiersma & Nilakant, 2008; Long & Helms Mills, 2010). Critical approaches are based on a different conception of human beings centred on dignity and equality (Hicks, 2002, 2003), which regards people holistically (Gardner, 2013, 2016). This different conception of human beings is grounded on a profound commitment to the flourishing of the whole person and is observable in how organisations treat the people with whom they interact (Porth et al., 2013). A critical approach to spirituality means that managers treat people simply as ends unto themselves, which would lead to a deep commitment to respect the inherent dignity of the individual (Polley et al., 2005; Porth et al., 2003).

Furthermore, such spirituality leads to a critical analysis of managerial practices (Bell, 2007) and challenges management by emphasising critique, moral reflection and receptiveness to otherness (Langenberg, 2011). It also changes our understanding of management (Porth et al., 2013), leading critical voices to push for alternative management approaches. Although the sample is about critical spirituality, the key themes reveal that this spirituality also points to constructive aspects by debating a different conception of human beings or alternative approaches to management. These discussions indicate the developmental and emancipatory elements of critical spirituality. These identified four clusters of key themes provide a framework of potential implications for management theory and practice.

1.5 Implications for Management Theory and Practice

Based on the key themes of critical spirituality, the following implications for management theory and practice can be identified, as described in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Framework of the Implications of Critical Spirituality

..the political, social and economic context	..values and purposes of organisations
Critical Spirituality: More focus on..	
..a different conception of human beings	..alternative approaches to management

1.5.1 Implication 1: More Focus on the Political, Social and Economic Context

Critical approaches to spirituality scrutinise the working world and the political, social and economic context of individuals (Bell, 2008; Boje, 2008). Regarding the implications of critical spirituality for management theory and practice, it would be reductionist to debate this topic without its political, social and economic context (Case & Gosling, 2010). Industrial relations, labour conditions, employment rights and trade union coverage are issues to be discussed, as there are major differences between countries. Employees in the United States, for example, have little or no voice in company functions. By contrast, diverse European models emphasise the role of the state and cooperation between employers and employees to recognise employees' voices in company issues beyond wages and working conditions. As spirituality at work is scientifically discussed primarily in the international (i.e. United States-dominated) research community, differences in industrial relations, labour conditions, and social systems have to be considered (Brown, 2003; Kamoche & Pinnington, 2012; Streeck & Yamamura, 2001; Tackney, 2009).

In management research, societal issues and social objectives have a tenuous position (Lips-Wiersma & Nilakant, 2008; Zald & Lounsbury, 2010), as most of the mainstream management research scarcely explores critical aspects of social, political, and power processes in organisations (Bell, 2005, 2008). For management

theory and practice, paying attention to the political, social and economic context would mean addressing wider concerns of social issues and human development (Ray et al., 2014; Steingard, 2005) as well as debating critical perspectives of capitalism and managerialism, and arbitrary implementation of values and beliefs in organisations.

1.5.2 Implication 2: More Focus on the Values and Purposes of Organisations

Critical approaches to spirituality can provide a distinctive contribution to mainstream management research by focusing on the values and purposes of organisations. Nevertheless, to be applicable in management theory and practice, researchers and managers need to debate the tension resulting from emphasising a purpose beyond profit in existing management culture. Management is challenged to pursue an ideal higher purpose within the practical constraints of the organisational context (Lips-Wiersma & Nilakant, 2008). In management literature, we find values such as responsibility, trust, integrity, honesty, humility and benevolence, but these values are often described rather superficially (Bouckaert & Zsolnai, 2011; Fry, 2003; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004). This raises questions for management theory and practice, such as how values are understood (Wicks, 2014) and how they can be fostered in organisations (Argandoña, 2003). As values are defined as central beliefs and ideals guiding decisions and conduct, they become an integral part of our being and shape our character (Argandoña, 2003; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). Knowledge of values is useless unless people strive habitually to incorporate them into their behaviour; therefore, values are linked to Aristotle's notion of virtue (Argandoña, 2003; Cavanagh & Bandsuch, 2002; McGhee & Grant, 2008; McKeon, 1941; Melé, 2005). Cavanagh and Bandsuch (2002) and Gotsis and Kortezi (2008) discuss virtue as a benchmark for spirituality at work, proposing that a closer examination of the link between values and virtues may offer new perspectives in management theory.

Discussing the values and purposes of organisations, the critical literature disregards the management research that clearly states that profits are not the primary purpose for starting up or maintaining a business. This applies particularly to the fields of small and middle-sized and family firms in which values are a central issue (Distelberg & Sorenson, 2009; Marques et al., 2014; Sageder et al., 2018).

1.5.3 Implication 3: More Focus on a Different Conception of Human Beings

Management theory and practice, which perceive organisations as an interconnection of contracts with the goal of maximising profits, view employees as cost factors (Lips-Wiersma & Nilakant, 2008). Considering human welfare as a primary purpose of organisations would lead to a different responsibility towards employees based on a distinctive conception of human beings. Employees are no longer con-

sidered as another input into organisations' processes but rather acknowledged as whole persons bringing their hearts, souls, creativity, exceptional talents and unique spirits to work (Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007; Karakas, 2010; Leigh, 1997). However, to be applicable in management theory and practice, it has to be noted that such terms and spiritual talking can cause difficulties within management, which are used to treat people from an instrumental perspective (Dantley, 2005).

If management theory no longer refers to the rational profit- and utility-maximising "homo oeconomicus" (Brzezicka & Wiśniewski, 2014; Hicks, 2003; Kurt et al., 2016; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Sheep, 2006), it would need a different theory of the individual. Spirituality at work, although heavily relying on the concept of the whole person, lacks a theory of the individual. To theorise the whole person, management scholars have to make sense of irrationality, incompleteness and inconsistency (Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2014) as well as the terms used to define spirituality, such as meaning, interconnectedness, transcendence and innerness. A critical approach entails that managers treat employees in practice merely as ends unto themselves, implying a deep commitment to the inherent dignity of the individual (Polley et al., 2005; Porth et al., 2003).

1.5.4 Implication 4: More Focus On Alternative Approaches in Management Theory and Practice

Management is not neutral but represents a system of power and privilege, influencing people and the environment (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2003; Parker, 2002; Steingard, 2005). Viewing organisations as a nexus of contracts that aim to maximise profits has resulted in highly competitive organisations with reward structures and climates fostering self-interest and managers primarily judged on short-term results (Lips-Wiersma & Nilakant, 2008). A critical approach would change the practice of management by encouraging managers to make a substantial contribution to the well-being of themselves, human beings and the planet. This spirituality could support the profound responsibility of management to treat all people connected with the organisation with caring, concern and dignity (Giacalone & Eylon, 2000; Mitroff, 1998; Porth et al., 2003; Steingard, 2005).

As is typical for a fledgling paradigm, diverse theoretical approaches are discussed (Giacalone & Eylon, 2000), which try to include spirituality (e.g. Fry, 2003; Hicks, 2003; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; Pawar, 2009; Pruzan, 2011; Steingard, 2005). Remarkably, some of these approaches refer to diversity and emphasise that it is not the task of management to promote a single spiritual or religious approach but rather to create a culture in which spiritual diversity can be negotiated and lived (Fry, 2003; Hicks, 2003; Karakas, 2010; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). Therefore, management theory and practice have to discuss the conflicting views and practices of a diverse workforce, including spiritual and religious as well as political, cultural

and other differences. It rarely comprehends employees' depth of commitment to spiritual and religious obligations (Hicks, 2002, 2003).

Regarding alternative theoretical approaches to management, we have to be aware that critical spirituality is not the only concept focusing on considerations beyond traditional management perspectives. The Academy of Management interest group of critical management is challenging established managerial practices by developing critical interpretations of management and discussing alternatives (Bell, 2005).

In terms of practical examples of critical spirituality, our sample just offers historical cases such as the catholic worker-priests in the time of 1943 to 1954 (Bell, 2007) or the role of Industrial mission in the miners' strike 1984–85 in the United Kingdom (Bell, 2005). Actual examples of workplace spirituality in organisations are sometimes cited, but there is no particular indication that these might be critical approaches. The only practical examples of critical spirituality we have discovered are the Catholic workplace chaplaincies in Germany and Austria (Federal Commission of Workplace Chaplaincy in Germany, 2010; Gruber, 2013; Wall-Strasser, n.d.) with their emphasis on a different conception of human beings, their focus on the political, social and economic context as well as alternative approaches to management.

5 Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research

1.6 Conclusion

Management inquiry into spirituality requires new research paradigms, methodologies and ideas as well as a different language (McKee et al., 2008; Mitroff, 1998; Steingard, 2005; Tackney et al., 2017). This paper contributes to the prevailing literature by providing an interdisciplinary systematic analysis of critical spirituality that identifies its theoretical foundations and synthesises its key themes to outline implications for management theory and practice. Furthermore, the paper is also valuable for management practice by offering a basis for critically reflecting on managerial practices. As a result, we provided an understanding of spirituality beyond traditional management perspectives against the background of increasing migration and a new generation of workforce in Europe.

We would like to point out that there are different approaches to spirituality in the workplace, and distinguishing among them is crucial to critical spirituality research. The different theoretical foundations and key themes show the diverse perspectives from which researchers do critical spirituality research. The most influential theoretical foundations of critical spirituality are such philosophical considerations as critical theory, contemplations of Foucault regarding critique, the technical imperative of Ellul and existentialism. Furthermore, authors refer to the sociological concepts of Bourdieu and theological approaches such as liberation theology, Catholic Social Teaching, other religious concepts, and notions of human

dignity and equality. The philosophical and religious foundations chosen by the authors in the sample are highly critical of capitalism, structural inequalities, the prevailing social relations and power hierarchies in organisations. By contrast, the critical approaches emphasise values, human dignity and equality. Consequently, the key themes of critical spirituality identified in this paper suggest four main implications for management theory and practice: more focus on the political, social and economic context; on the values and purposes of organisations; on a different conception of human beings and on alternative approaches to management. The key themes show that critical spirituality also includes constructive aspects by discussing a different conception of human beings or alternative approaches to management. These discussions relate to Foucault's notion of critique, which he interprets as a rupture from the prevailing order but already containing the foundation for change and is essential for the transformation and creation of other societies, companies and worldviews (Foucault, 1997).

As mainstream management research rarely explores the critical aspects of social, political and power processes in organisations, critical spirituality would include more in-depth analyses of the political, social and economic context. A consideration of these aspects in management theory and practice would entail addressing the wider concerns of social issues and human development (Bell, 2008; Boje, 2008; Ray et al., 2014; Steingard, 2005) as well as discussing critical perspectives of capitalism and managerialism, and arbitrary implementation of values and beliefs in organisations. By scrutinising the purposes and values of organisations, a critical approach to spirituality can contribute to mainstream management research, which studies these topics rather superficially. However, to be relevant for management theory and practice, the tension caused by a purpose beyond profit within the practical constraints of organisations should be discussed (Lips-Wiersma & Nilakant, 2008). Management theory and practice regarding human welfare as a primary purpose of organisations would deliberate a different conception of human beings. Managers would consider employees with a deep obligation to the inherent dignity of the individual (Polley et al., 2005; Porth et al., 2003).To be applicable in management theory and practice, it has to be considered that such a different conception of human beings can cause difficulties for managers, who are used to dealing with people from an instrumental perspective (Dantley, 2005). Regarding employees as "whole persons" (Hicks, 2003; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009; Sheep, 2006) would generate new perspectives for management theory and practice with a different understanding of individuals and their irrationality, incompleteness and inconsistency (Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2014) as well as recurrent keywords of spirituality such as meaning, interconnectedness, transcendence and innerness. Alternative approaches to management that aim to integrate spirituality emphasise that it is the task of the management to create a culture in which spiritual and religious diversity can be lived (Hicks, 2003; Karakas, 2010; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). This leads not only to reflections about the accommodation of diverse

spiritual and religious viewpoints but also to a more profound understanding of employees' depth of commitment to these spiritual and religious obligations (Hicks, 2002, 2003).

The challenge is how managers might translate critical spirituality into practice. Nevertheless, there are practical implications as management could benefit from alternative models of spirituality, which would enable them to question their managerial practices and the way people are viewed and treated in organisations. Managers might use different criteria to critically reflect on managerial practices and to assess diverging views and practices. As proposed by Cavanagh & Bandsuch (2002) and Hicks (2002, 2003), differing views and managerial practices could be evaluated based on their ability to promote moral behaviour, good character, or respectful pluralism in organisations. Furthermore, managers interested in or educated in ethical traditions could reflect on how virtue ethics or deontology, for example, might be appropriate as a basis for assessing spirituality in organisations (Brügger, 2021; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008). Moreover, managers might realise that spirituality is more likely to be integrated into an organisation if it comes from the bottom up than if it is instructed by management.

1.7 Limitations

Based on our European tradition, we are sceptical regarding the critical approach to spirituality, too. Considering that the philosophical and theological foundations selected by the authors are highly critical of capitalism, prevailing social relations and power hierarchies, there is a rather one-sided view of management. The criticism is mainly oriented towards mainstream management theory and practice and disregards the notable variety within. In addition, critical spirituality, identical to the prevailing literature on spirituality at work, focuses on a Western, mostly Judeo-Christian perspective of spirituality.

Any conventional systematic literature review concentrates on articles published in ranked journals. However, we also added papers from non-ranked journals, conference papers, books and book chapters to capture the breadth of critical spirituality and because these publication forms remain relevant for other scientific disciplines. Therefore, we have to be cautious regarding the quality of the publications. The sample is further restricted to English-language publications. The search process, including the use of databases, choice of keywords, a supplement of publications from the references lists and selection process, entails the risk of not having identified all relevant publications.

1.8 Further Research Avenues

We discovered primarily conceptual articles of critical spirituality, which are based on critical analyses of literature, definitions and concepts related to workplace spirituality (e.g. Brown, 2003; Hicks, 2002; Houghton et al., 2016). Some authors

assess the literature in the context of a specific theoretical background (e.g. Case & Gosling, 2010; Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007; Kamoche & Pinnington, 2012; Long & Helms Mills, 2010), while other papers provide anecdotal examples from organisations (e.g. Bell & Taylor, 2003; Cavanagh, 1999). The few empirical approaches rely mainly on historical cases using secondary data or document analyses in archives (e.g. Bell, 2007; 2008). Only two articles present their own empirical research with case studies and interviews (e.g. Bell, 2005; Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2014). Therefore, more empirical studies are still lacking. Our framework of implications based on the key themes of critical spirituality proposes a broad array of future research avenues. Some fruitful directions for management scholars are already described in the implications, among others paying more attention to the political, social and economic context and scrutinising the values and purposes of organisations.

Explicitly concerning the political, social and economic context, more studies about spirituality at work in different countries could thematise industrial relations, labour conditions and social systems and provide empirical data for this scientific discourse. Regarding the values of organisations, a closer investigation of the connection between values and virtues may provide new perspectives, as would an examination of the sources and origins of values in organisations. Moreover, a different conception of human beings and human dignity could become fascinating topics of management theory. Future research on employees as whole persons would extend our knowledge of the irrationality, incompleteness, inconsistency, interconnectedness, transcendence and innerness of organisational members. As such issues as meaning, purpose and a sense of community have long been recognised by management theory and practice (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Steingard, 2005), future research has to scrutinise what is really innovative within these alternative approaches to management. Furthermore, it would be interesting to initiate scientific work that indicates how these alternative theoretical approaches could be implemented in practice or are already being applied. As it is an essential task of management to encourage organisations in which spiritual and religious diversity can be lived, more research would be helpful that studies the ways in which people in organisations holding conflicting views of spirituality and religion can work together. Diversity is not only the consideration of all beliefs but also includes respecting people who oppose spirituality. Further research on people opposing spirituality at work would thus teach us more about possible conflicting views. Moreover, the kind of skills management needs in spiritually and religiously diverse workplaces would be interesting to explore.

As we tried to integrate different disciplines in this review, we regard more interdisciplinary approaches with philosophy and theology as useful, as these disciplines have a long tradition of discussing the relationship between organisations and spirituality – even longer than management itself has been a discipline. Early examples of these discussions include the Church Fathers, the rules of St. Benedict and other leaders of medieval monasteries, or Luther's affirmation of the holiness

of daily work and the Protestant ethic that has inspired ideas of management and work today (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Deslandes, 2020; Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007; Hicks, 2002; Steingard, 2005).

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Appendix 1

No	Author	Title	Category	Journal	CASB	Discipline	Year
1	Bell, E.	The contribution of Liberation Theology to critical spirituality: Industrial mission and the UK Miners' Strike 1984–85	Proceedings	Critical Management Studies Conference	-	Management	2005
2	Bell, E.	Disruptive religion: The case of the catholic worker-priests (1943–1954).	Article	Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion	1	Management	2007
3	Bell, E.	Towards a critical spirituality of organisation	Article	Culture and Organisation	2	Management	2008
4	Bell, E. & Taylor, S.	The elevation of work: Pastoral power and the new age work ethic	Article	Organisation	3	Management	2003
5	Boje, D. M.	Epilogue: Critical spirituality	Article	Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion	1	Management	2005
6	Boje, D.	Critical theory approaches to spirituality in business	Book Chapter		-	Management	2008
7	Boyd, D.	The critical spirituality of Paulo Freire	Article	International Journal of Lifelong Education	-	Pedagogy	2012
8	Brown, R. B.	Organisational spirituality: The sceptic's version	Article	Organisation	3	Management	2003
9	Bussey, M.	From change to progress: Critical spirituality and the futures of futures studies.	Article	Futures	2	Philosophy	2002
10	Bussey, M.	Critical spirituality: Towards a revitalised humanity	Article	Journal of Futures Studies	-	Philosophy	2006
11	Case, P. & Gosling, J.	The spiritual organisation: Critical reflections on the instrumentality of workplace spirituality	Article	Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion	1	Management	2010
12	Cavanagh, G. F.	Spirituality for managers: Context and critique	Article	Journal of Organizational Change Management	2	Management	1999
13	Cavanagh, G. F.	Religion and spirituality in business: Obstacles and opportunities	Book Chapter		-	Management	2003
14	Dantley, M. E.	The power of critical spirituality to act and to reform	Article	Journal of School Leadership	-	Pedagogy	2005
15	Driscoll, C. & Wiebe, E.	Technical spirituality at work: Jacques Ellul on workplace spirituality	Article	Journal of Management Inquiry	3	Management	2007
16	Fernando, M.	Workplace spirituality: Another management fad?	Book Chapter			Management	2005
17	Gardner, M. F.	Critical spirituality: A holistic approach to contemporary practice	Book		-	Healthcare/ Social Work	2013
18	Gardner, M. F.	Critical spirituality in holistic practice	Article	Journal for the Study of Spirituality	-	Healthcare/ Social Work	2016

No	Author	Title	Category	Journal	CASB	Discipline	Year
19	Hicks, D. A.	Spiritual and religious diversity in the workplace: Implications for leadership	Article	The Leadership Quarterly	4	Management	2002
20	Hicks, D. A.	Religion and the workplace: Pluralism, spirituality, leadership	Book		-	Theology	2003
21	Houghton, J. D. et al.	The what, why, and how of spirituality in the workplace revisited: A 14-year update and extension	Article	Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion	1	Management	2016
22	Kamoche, K. & Pinnington, A. H.	Managing people 'spiritually': A Bourdieusian critique	Article	Work, Employment and Society	4	Management	2012
23	Langenberg, S.	Critique as a notion of spirituality	Book Chapter		-	Philosophy	2011
24	Lips-Wiersma, M. & Mills, A. J.	Understanding the basic assumptions about human nature in workplace spirituality: Beyond the critical versus positive divide	Article	Journal of Management Inquiry	3	Management	2014
25	Lips-Wiersma, M. & Nilakant, V.	Practical compassion: Toward a critical spiritual foundation for corporate responsibility	Book Chapter		-	Management	2008
26	Long, B. S. & Helms Mills, J.	Workplace spirituality, contested meaning, and the culture of organisation: A critical sensemaking account	Article	Journal of Organizational Change Management	2	Management	2010
27	Polley, D. et al.	Paying the devil his due: Limits and liabilities of workplace spirituality	Article	International Journal of Organizational Analysis	1	Management	2005
28	Porth, S. J. et al.	Spirituality and business: The latest management fad or the next breakthrough	Book Chapter		-	Management	2003
29	Rousseau, D. M.	Patron saint of organisational research? Lessons from St. Teresa of Avila for scholars and for evidence based practice	Article	Journal of Management Inquiry	3	Management	2009
30	Tackney, C. T. & Shah, I.	Authenticity as a criterion variable for Islam and Roman Catholic theology of the workplace analysis	Article	Management Research Review	1	Management	2017
31	Wolf, T. & Feldbauer-Durstmüller, B.	Workplace chaplaincy: A literature review	Article	Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion	1	Management	2018