

**SPIRITUAL IDENTITY, STAKEHOLDER ATTRIBUTES, AND  
FAMILY BUSINESS WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY STAKEHOLDER SALIENCE**

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**ABSTRACT**

In this paper, we argue that the spiritual identity of members of a family business can positively or negatively impact the salience of stakeholders to the complex coalition of decision makers that comprises managers in that business. Utilizing stakeholder salience theory and role theory, we examine the complex theoretical relationships among spiritual identity, stakeholder attributes, and family business stakeholder salience. This examination reveals the multidimensionality of workplace spirituality and the need for finer-grained distinctions in stakeholder attributes, to better represent the complexities inherent in a family business context. In this article develop four propositions, through which we offer the following contributions to the literature on family business workplace spirituality: (1) new analysis frameworks for future use, (2) prototypical descriptions of stakeholder types and representative vignettes for making finer-grained distinctions, (3) multidimensionality implications for exploring the somewhat unexpected or under-considered topics in the workplace spirituality literature, and (4) proposals for family-business-specific effects for workplace spirituality on outcomes that arise from inherent family ties in businesses.

## SPIRITUAL IDENTITY, STAKEHOLDER ATTRIBUTES, AND FAMILY BUSINESS WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY STAKEHOLDER SALIENCE

### INTRODUCTION

It has been argued that where principal institutions intersect (such as family and business), managerial perceptions of stakeholder salience – the degree to which managers give priority to competing stakeholder claims – will be different and more complex than where guiding institutions are based on a single dominant logic (Mitchell *et al.* 2011, p. 235). This is because family businesses face a unique set of challenges in prioritizing the stakeholders which matter most, in particular because the intimate involvement of family members in a business firm often results in different goals and behaviors than what is typically found to exist in non-family firms; and these differences can alter the bases of family business stakeholder salience: who or what really counts in family businesses (cf. Freeman 1994; Habbershon *et al.* 2003; Mitchell *et al.* 1997, 2011).

Impinging upon these already complex stakeholder relationships, however, is yet another institution: religion – or more generally – spirituality, as encapsulated in the spiritual identity of the parties involved. Spirituality has been connected to family business as relevant to kinship affiliation (Peredo 2003) and therefore as an area where the family business literature could be extended (Chrisman *et al.* 2011). We argue that the spiritual identity of participants in a family business (which we define to be the extent to which participants in a family business are aware of and act upon feelings, thoughts, values, or experiences that have as their point of reference something greater than self), influences workplace spirituality behavior, and therefore might also be associated with family business stakeholder salience. However, the interface between workplace spirituality in family business and family business stakeholder salience is, at present, underconceptualized. In this paper we apply stakeholder salience theory (e.g., Mitchell *et al.* 1997) to examine the complex theoretical relationships among spiritual identity, stakeholder attributes, and family business workplace spirituality stakeholder salience.

In general, stakeholder salience theory suggests, and has empirically demonstrated, that a relatively small set of stakeholder attributes – e.g., stakeholder power, legitimacy, and urgency – can explain a relatively large proportion of variance in stakeholder salience (cf. Agle *et al.* 1999). Specifically, it

has been argued that in the family business setting, the more-focused subset – of normative power, legacy-based legitimacy, and succession-focused urgency – can be useful in helping researchers to understand the “. . . distinct and idiosyncratic aspects associated with the family business context (e.g., non-economic goals and socioemotional wealth, family history and intentions for transgenerational sustainability, altruistic tendencies) that makes stakeholder salience issues more complex” (Mitchell *et al.* 2011, p. 246). In this article, we therefore suggest that additional variance in these idiosyncratic aspects of family business might be explained by an even finer-grained application to the dimensionalization of family business stakeholder attributes. We argue further that by distinguishing the secular from the spiritual within each family-business-specific attribute, the following contributions are possible.

First, consistent with the Call for Papers for this Special Issue, the application of these further-detailed stakeholder salience concepts to the family business setting can: “provide researchers and practitioners in various fields of study (e.g., family sciences, management, psychology, economics, law) with foundations and frameworks to be used for deeper and more reflective teaching, research, writing, and decision-making.)” In this respect, we also intend to assist scholars and practitioners to explore further the practical processes of stakeholder prioritization in the unique and important context of family business with and without workplace spirituality influences. Accordingly, in the next sections we develop four propositions that present the key relationships suggested by our conceptual analysis.

Second, by utilizing a workplace-spirituality sensitive approach to family business stakeholder salience, we offer the opportunity for stakeholders – i.e. all concerned – to better assess: (1) the costs and benefits of the decision and operations systems that might be affected by workplace spirituality, (2) the expectations for appraising success/failure, performance, etc. in this light, and (3) some of the previously-noted idiosyncrasies inherent in the family business setting, such as non-economic goals and socioemotional wealth, family history and intentions for transgenerational sustainability, altruistic tendencies. To this end, we dimensionalize our model with tables presenting prototypical descriptions and vignettes that together capture the nature and effects of these finer-grained distinctions.

Third, we hope to demonstrate through this conceptual analysis, the multidimensionality of workplace spirituality, including the derivation and possible explanation of unexpected implications (e.g. the

potential downside/dark-side elements that arise where workplace spirituality in some ways negatively shapes stakeholder relationships); and also the role of dominant coalitions (cf. Cyert and March 1963) in salience-based decision making given workplace spirituality factors.

Fourth, we see the potential for the dimensionalization we present herein to have implications for key family business activities that are more constrained due to inherent family ties: such as succession planning, the management of non-family employees, and the maintaining of effective relationships with among the unique set of family business stakeholders.

## THEORY

The stakeholder approach to organizational analysis focuses attention on relationships between an organization and its social environment – as represented by its stakeholders. A stakeholder is defined to be “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm’s objectives” (Freeman 1984, p. 46). Primary stakeholder groups include customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders, regulators, and local communities (Donaldson & Preston 1995). And where – consistent with Mitchell *et al.* (1997, 2011) – stakeholder salience is defined to be (as previously noted): *the degree to which managers give priority to competing stakeholder claims*, we suggest that a theory of family business stakeholder salience that is impacted by workplace spirituality ought to do the following: (1) lay out as a foundation the family business stakeholder attributes to be associated with family business stakeholder salience and a theoretical logic for this association, (2) provide an explanation for the manner in which stakeholder spiritual identity is associated with such family business stakeholder attributes, (3) demonstrate how these family business stakeholder attributes more specifically identify family business stakeholder types and levels of salience (as a logical extension of an analysis such as that presented in Mitchell *et al.* 1997), and (4) suggest the manner in which spiritual identity may be associated with family business stakeholder salience. This section proceeds to address each of these points in the order suggested.

### Family Business Stakeholder Attributes

Mitchell *et al.* (1997, p. 863) argue that “. . . just a few attributes [can be used to] identify different classes of stakeholders that are salient to managers.” In their article these authors offer a rationale for three

such attributes to figure prominently in stakeholder identification and salience: power, legitimacy, and urgency. They suggest that “. . . stakeholder power and legitimacy of the claim are frequently treated as competing explanations of stakeholder status, when instead they are partially intersecting variables,” and that “. . . by showing how power and legitimacy interact, and when combined with urgency, [how they] create different types of stakeholders with different expected behavioral patterns with respect to the firm . . . [that] an opportunity for a theory of stakeholder identification [can] move [stakeholder theorizing] forward.”

Mitchell *et al.* (2011, p. 241) have recently suggested a specialized version of this argument to apply it to the family business setting by reasoning “. . . that the attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency that help to define the salience of family stakeholders in a family firm differ in important ways from general business stakeholder salience.” They therefore argue “. . . (1) that whereas utilitarian power is critical in the general business case, normative power is more typical in family business stakeholder salience; (2) that whereas in a general business context legitimacy is socially constructed, for family stakeholders legitimacy is based on heredity; and (3) that whereas temporality and criticality are somewhat independent in the general business case (Mitchell *et al.* 1997), they are linked in the family business case because of family ties/ family-centered non-economic goals” (Mitchell *et al.* 2011, p. 241).

However, this specialization of stakeholder-identifying attributes raises a question that has not been sufficiently addressed: In the family business setting, if stakeholders and their attributes are the “objects” of salience, who or what is the “subject”? In short, it is important to ask: salient to whom? In previous literature, it appears to us that “managers” were selected as the focal “subject” – the “determiners” of salience – because of their position within the stakeholder network web: one of high density and high centrality (cf. Rowley 1997). In the family business setting, we then propose that the same standard ought to be applied; and it therefore seems to be a logical extension of prior work to argue that the salience-determining “subject” which occupies a similar position in the family business network (high density and centrality of network relationships), should therefore be the party who/which determines family business stakeholder salience. The term “managers” is insufficiently inclusive where family and business intersect, because due to this intersection there are additional parties who are necessarily involved in the setting of goals and priorities (cf. Mitchell *et al.* 2003). A more-inclusive person/ actor/ entity must be conceptualized.

Cyert and March (1963, p. 27-32) observe that the setting of goals and priorities in organizations is often accomplished by a group of organizational participants whose interests align, and who then attempt to impose their preferences on the organization; and they conceptualize this group as a “dominant coalition” (cf., Scott 1987, p. 270). We therefore suggest in the family business setting, that the most likely candidate for this salience-determining position in stakeholder salience theory is the dominant coalition in the family business system (Cyert and March 1963; Mitchell *et al.* 2003). Consequently, the more-focused question which naturally follows is: how might a theoretical linkage be envisioned among the following: preferences of the dominant coalition that comprises “management” in a firm, a set of family business-centric stakeholder attributes that include spiritual identity, and family business stakeholder salience?

To answer this question, we constructed a simple thought experiment. We reasoned that it is plausible to suggest – given the multiplicity of stakeholders in any firm, but especially in a family firm – that our use of a multi-lens perspective might prove to be helpful in theorizing in a multiple-relationship setting. By a multi-lens perspective, for purposes of our reasoning we mean: a perspective that seeks observational consistencies among multiple vantage points to illuminate a phenomenon. Role theory offers such a perspective. We therefore reason that to the extent a person/ actor/ entity is viewed in a given role from multiple perspectives, then the focal actions observed with respect to such a person/ actor / entity, may be interpreted to be shaped by that role (cf. Goffman 1959).

Thus, for example, as drivers of cars we obey a policeman who is directing traffic. Why? Because there is an underlying observational internal consistency suggesting that three roles are interacting virtually interchangeably with respect to the salient object; traffic flow – an active-entity role (the driver) responding to an identity-conveying role (the police officer), thereby shaping the governance-guiding role (actions of the driver in obedience to the police officer), and in turn, producing a predictable entity role (law-abiding driver). Through this reasoning we can derive a useful theoretical-cycle axiom:

$$\textit{entity} \equiv \textit{identity} \equiv \textit{governance} \equiv \textit{entity}.$$

Stated in observational terms we might say: a person driving a vehicle (entity role), recognizes a person in a police uniform (identity role), which shapes pressures toward obedience (governance role) and thereby the actions of the driver (entity). Or, to demonstrate the inherent multi-lens interchangeability, the

statement might be restated to say: Willingness to obey traffic direction (governance role) by a car driver (entity role) occurs because the direction comes from a police officer (identity role). This multi-lens and interchangeable theoretical and analytical structure (entity  $\equiv$  identity  $\equiv$  governance  $\equiv$  entity) therefore offers to scholars a multi-lens equivalence-based theoretical logic (cf. Mitchell 2009) that is useful as a theorizing tool in proposition development and also in the extension of stakeholder theory.

In the following sections we shall therefore – according to the foregoing role-equivalence logic – argue that the relevant managerial entity in our conceptualization (the dominant coalition in a family business) responds to the identity (spiritual identity-shaped stakeholder attributes associated with that business), which therefore shapes governance (family business workplace spirituality stakeholder salience: who or what really counts to the dominant coalition – (in essence shaping the entity): who the dominant coalition attends to). Accordingly, we build a theoretical chain of reasoning consistent with this logic to develop four propositions which examine, in turn: the effects of spiritual identity on family business stakeholder attributes (P1: which depends on identity  $\equiv$  entity role consistency); the effects of these attributes on stakeholder types and family business stakeholder salience (P2 & P3: which depend on entity  $\equiv$  governance role consistency); and finally, the effects of spiritual identity on family business workplace spirituality stakeholder salience (P4: which depends on identity  $\equiv$  governance role consistency).

Hence, through our use of the multi-lens-consistency perspective as developed above, we establish the required theoretical linkage among the following constructs: (1) preferences of “managers”:some dominant coalition in the firm, (2) a set of family business-centric stakeholder attributes that include spiritual identity, and (3) family business workplace spirituality stakeholder salience. Therefore, in service of this objective, we turn next to an exploration of the concept of spiritual identity as it might affect family business stakeholder attributes.

### **Spiritual Identity and Family Business Stakeholder Attributes**

**Spirituality.** The meaning of “spirituality” is derived from the Latin root *spiritus* meaning breath or life. The term, frequently mentioned in the Hebraic Old Testament (*ruach*) and the Greek New Testament (*pneuma*), has historically been referenced in the context of religion (Bibby 1995; Zinnbauer *et al.* 1997). Emphasizing the religious aspect of spirituality, many scholars view spirituality as a relationship with God or



the divine (Bierly *et al.* 2000; Dale 1991; Emblen 1992; Fort 1995; Tart 1975), the sacred (Hill *et al.* 2000; Larson *et al.* 1998; Nash and McLennan 2001; Roof 1993) or higher power (Armstrong 1995; Bregman and Thierman 1995). The Merriam Webster dictionary also borrows the context of religion to define spirituality to be: something that in ecclesiastical law belongs to the church; sensitivity or attachment to religious values. Various additional scholarly definitions of spirituality have appeared in the literature over the past three decades (see Table 1).

{Insert Table 1 about here}

However, historically, spirituality has not always been distinguished from religiousness<sup>1</sup>. Instead, development of the differentiation between religiousness and spirituality has occurred over time as the rise of secularism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and a popular disillusionment with religious institutions as a hindrance to personal experiences of the sacred (Turner *et al.* 1995; Zinnbauer *et al.* 1997) have influenced the research dialogue. In the past two decades, interest in spirituality as a social phenomenon has greatly increased (e.g., Macdonald 2009). For example, interpretations of American religious life have shifted to include more elements being defined as spiritual (Zinnbauer *et al.* 1997). At the same time, there has been a drop in public confidence in religion and religious leadership (Turner *et al.* 1995).

As a result, many scholarly definitions address humanistic or people-oriented elements of spirituality by stressing human achievement or potential (Spilka 1993). For example, (1) not a few definitions include self-transcendence as a descriptor (Barnett *et al.* 1999; Benner 1989; Chandler and Holden 1992; Delbecq 1999; Elkins *et al.* 1988; Mauritzen 1988; Schneiders 1989), while (2) others focus on the quest for ultimacy (Elkins *et al.* 1988; Emmons 2000; Schneiders 1989; Tart 1975; Wong 1998); and (3) still others on a combination of divinity, transcendence, and ultimacy as important definitional attributes where spirituality has, as a result, been conceptualized as both a subjective experience personal expression (Delbecq 1999; Elkins *et al.* 1988; Fort 1995; Lewis and Geroy 2000; Schneiders 1989), as an objective reality which involves ultimate and personal truths (Wong 1998), or as self-awareness regarding

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<sup>1</sup> Hill *et al.*, (2000) and Zinnbauer *et al.*, (1997) distinguish religiousness from religiosity. These authors refer to religiousness as a broader concept than religiosity. For instance, Hill *et al.* (1997) define intrinsic religiosity as applying religion as guiding point for one's everyday decisions, whereas – as we understand it – the notion of religiousness may mean more: such as church membership, propensity to produce and consume products symbolically related to religion, habitual ritual, etc. We adopt the broader concept of religiousness in this paper.

one's basic psychological nature (Hart and Brady 2005). Consequently, spirituality has begun to acquire distinct meanings and connotations shaped by these trends.

However, in this paper we do not treat religiousness and spirituality as interchangeable because it is not essential to our argument that we pursue this distinction beyond the attention we have given it. Accordingly, we conceive of spirituality to be a somewhat broader concept than religiousness in the sense that, in our treatment, spirituality can be conceptualized to include all subjective experiences of personal transcendence (that may not necessarily be related to religious beliefs, e.g., Barnett *et al.* 1999; Benner 1989). This broader conceptualization (self-referent and/or religiousness-referent) has, in turn, influenced the notion of spiritual identity that we utilize herein.

**Spiritual identity.** Interest in spirituality within the social science research community has grown over time. As a part of this swelling interest, attention to the relationship between spirituality and identity has also increased (e.g., Hill *et al.* 2000; Kiesling *et al.* 2006; Macdonald 2009; Poll and Smith 2003; Wink and Dillon 2002; Zinnbauer *et al.* 1997). The importance of spirituality in social science research was first acknowledged by classical social theorists such as Comte, Durkheim, Marx, and Weber (cf. Hill *et al.* 2000), as these scholars became well-known as contributors to the sociology of religion. For these classical social theorists, religion represented an important part of a late 19<sup>th</sup> Century society in the midst of social and economic upheavals (Davie 1998). Similarly, many early psychologists (e.g., Freud, James, Hall, etc.), and some later ones (e.g., Allport, Jung, Fromm, Maslow, etc.) have argued that spirituality, must be considered for a complete understanding of the person to be gained (cf. Hill *et al.* 2000). The combination of spirituality and identity, and as a result the notion of "spiritual identity," has been studied in human development (e.g., [non-exhaustively] Poll and Smith 2003), management and ethics (e.g., Sheep 2006; Weaver and Agle 2002), leadership (Klenke 2007), juvenile and adult psychology (Eliason *et al.* 2011; Markstrdom *et al.* 2010), to name but some of the relevant literature.

A variety of scholars have explored content, structure, and types of spiritual identities (see Table 2). In this article, we are primarily concerned with the "content" of spiritual identity because it is upon the basis of the substantive elements of spiritual identity that relationships among spiritual identity, stakeholder attributes, and family business stakeholder salience can be proposed and justified.

{Insert Table 2 about here}

In our review of the literature, we observe that the content of spiritual identity refers to unique aspects that an actor considers to be part of its sense of transcendence (e.g., Kiesling *et al.* 2006; Gall *et al.* 2011; Poll and Smith 2003; MacDonald 2009). Within this orientation, spiritual identity has been defined in a variety of ways. For instance, Macdonald (2009, p. 90) defines spiritual identity as “. . . how the individual ego relates to and incorporates spirituality into its personal sense of self.” Poll and Smith (2003, p. 129) define spiritual identity as “an individual’s belief that she or he is an eternal being and is connected to God.” Also, following a structural orientation, spiritual identity has been conceived as being composed of sub-dimensions (Klenke 2006; MacDonald 2009). For instance, in the context of authentic leadership, Klenke (2006) argues that there are three sub-dimensions that will form spiritual identity: (1) self-disclosure, (2) self-transcendence, and (3) self-sacrifice. Alternatively, some researchers have explored the definition of spiritual identities in terms of types (e.g., Kiesling *et al.* 2006). In a qualitative study, Kiesling *et al.* (2006) examined individuals’ narratives about their spiritual identity and observed three types of spiritual identity, which were labeled as follows: (1) foreclosed, (2) in moratorium, and (3) achieved (see Table 2). For purposes of our theory development, we consider the typology approach to be somewhat constraining, and we therefore argue for a definition that relies upon a synthesis of the concepts of dimensionality and connection to a higher power. Thus, we define spiritual identity to be: *the extent to which a social actor relates awareness (perceptions) of itself to feelings, thoughts, values, or experiences that address ultimate questions about the connection to something greater than itself.*

**Spiritual identity and family business stakeholder attributes.** Using the foregoing definition of spiritual identity has several implications for shaping and bounding theory development, and consequently for the proposed relationship between spiritual identity and family business stakeholder attributes. First, in this definition we incorporate religiousness but we are not limiting it only to institutional beliefs and practices such as church membership, church attendance, and commitment to the beliefs system of a church or of organized religion. Our definition also includes those experiences related to a social actor’s inner experiences and feelings of connectedness to something greater than itself. In this sense, the impact of spiritual identity on stakeholder attributes would be expected to implicate stakeholder relationships due to

expectations grounded in the inherent connectedness of inner world to outer world. Spiritual identity (to the extent present or absent) would thus be expected to affect the attributes of a given stakeholder.

Second, our definition sets an expanded boundary because it is intended to be levels-neutral. For example, spiritual identity can be applied to the group level in that a social group can display spiritual identity as part of common (additive) expressions among individuals of a social group (cf. Chan 1998). We note that it is for this reason that we have utilized the terms “it” and “itself” for reference to stakeholder actors rather than “s/he” or “her/himself.” This permits network-based interpretations of stakeholder theory to more readily be utilized.

Third, our account is developed from structural symbolic interactionist theorizing about self-identity (e.g., Burke 1980; Stryker 1980). Accordingly, we conceptualize an actor’s identity to be composed of different general dimensions (i.e., gender, profession, nationality, family) with spirituality being one of these, and which, itself, would be composed of the specific dimensions noted in our definition: i.e., feelings, thoughts, values, or experiences. In other words, based upon our definition, we can expect a social actor to exhibit a higher or lower degree of spiritual identity because spirituality is but one aspect of what self-identity encompasses and may be more or less present and/or more or less prominent. This departs from the notion suggested by other scholars who conceive of spirituality as being interchangeable with individual identity (for a review see Macdonald 2009), and suggests spiritual identity to be a distinct and useful construct in further dimensionalizing family business stakeholder attributes.

Accordingly we argue that because of this distinction, and because distinct persons tend to prefer and seek situations, relationships, and evaluations that are consistent with how they define themselves (e.g., Markus and Kunda 1986) that the family business stakeholder attributes of normative power, legacy-based legitimacy, and succession urgency are likely to impact this sense of an actor (entity) gaining something (i.e., identity) that extends beyond the business *per se*. We can then propose – using the identity  $\equiv$  entity consistency logic previously developed – a theoretical association between stakeholder spiritual identity and family business stakeholder attributes. Literature on family business supports this notion. For instance, recent studies suggest that family businesses are characterized by the propensity for family members to identify with the organization (Chrisman *et al.* 2012; Gomez-Mejia *et al.* 2007; Milton

2008). This self-defining role can, in turn, arise as an individual's satisfaction of needs for belonging, affect, and intimacy, or as providing something beyond the business itself (Kepner 1983; Kets de Vries 1993). Thus, using the identity  $\equiv$  entity consistency logic previously developed, we suggest that stakeholder spiritual identity is likely to impact family business stakeholder attributes as follows:

*Proposition 1: Stakeholder spiritual identity is associated with the presence or absence of the family business stakeholder attributes of normative power, legacy-based legitimacy, and succession urgency.*

Based on the underlying logic for our theorizing (entity  $\equiv$  identity  $\equiv$  governance  $\equiv$  entity), and upon this first propositional relationship (P1), it is therefore possible to utilize the next-following lens: to examine the relationships among the immediately following set of role-consistency elements implicated: specifically the extent of an entity  $\equiv$  governance role consistency association that links family business stakeholder attributes to both the naming/labeling of stakeholder types, and to family business stakeholder salience.

### **Family Business: Stakeholder Attributes, Stakeholder Types, and Stakeholder Salience**

The theorizing we present in this paper is based upon the idea that “. . . the distinctiveness of the family business context shapes, among other things, family business structure and relationships” (Mitchell *et al.* 2011, p. 240). This shaping may be manifest in a variety of ways: (1) in how success is defined by key stakeholders (Tagiuri and Davis 1992); (2) in the cognitions employees use to navigate the political landscape in family firms (Mitchell *et al.* 2003); (3) in the extent to which conflict influences firm performance (Kellermanns and Eddleston 2004); and (4) in the way family firms manage relationships and resources (Olson *et al.* 2003), and plan for the future (Sharma *et al.* 2003). We further suggest that family business stakeholder attributes, in particular the family-business-specific stakeholder attributes of normative power, legacy-based legitimacy and succession urgency are an extension of the more-general stakeholder attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency (Mitchell *et al.* 1997, 2011) and thereby also shape family business structure and relationships. The brief summary presented next is intended to help to distinguish general attributes (those thought to apply to organizations in general, cf. Mitchell *et al.* 1997), from specific attributes (those thought to apply to family businesses specifically, cf. Mitchell *et al.* 2011).

**General attributes: Power, legitimacy, and urgency.** Mitchell *et al.* (1997, p. 865) define stakeholder power as a condition where: “. . . one social actor, A, can get another social actor, B, to do something that B would not otherwise have done” (Dahl 1957; Pfeffer 1981, p. 3); stakeholder legitimacy as “. . . a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman 1995, p. 574)” (1997, p. 866); and stakeholder urgency as “. . . the degree to which [critical] stakeholder claims call for immediate attention” (1997, p. 867).

**Specific attributes: Family business power, legitimacy and urgency.** Mitchell *et al.* (2011) argue that “. . . while on the surface, the reasons why some family business stakeholders are more salient than others may seem simple (e.g., family ties affect who or what really counts); beneath the surface, explanations are more involved” (2011, p. 240). They argue that unique manifestations of power, legitimacy, and urgency are likely as a result. For example, with respect to power, they assert that:

“. . . the distinctive source of power in a family business is not *primarily* utilitarian, but rather – owing to the family element within the setting – is predominantly normative. For purposes of the analysis in this article we define family business normative power to be: *power that is based upon prestige, esteem, and social symbols such as love and acceptance*” (2011, p. 242).

They further suggest with respect to legitimacy, that:

“. . . rather than the perception-validated social ties that underpin general notions of stakeholder legitimacy, we suggest that social ties based on heredity are the source of legitimacy of family members in a family business. This distinction is likely to have pervasive effects upon questions of family business stakeholder salience and suggests that the attributes upon which family-business stakeholder salience depends are clearly distinguishable from those upon which general stakeholder salience is based. We therefore define legacy-based legitimacy in family business to be: *possessing status conferred by birth and/or relationship-based privilege*” (2011, p. 243-244).

And, additionally, with respect to urgency, they suggest that that:

“. . . in any organization that combines two institutional logics . . . sources of urgency vary from the case of organizations with more traditional logics and . . . [hence, the extent to which] criticality d(i.e., the importance of a stakeholder's claim) and temporality (i.e., the time sensitivity . . . [of] a stakeholder's claim) are [connected or] independent” (2011, p. 244).

Based upon this premise, Mitchell *et al.* (2011) argue that in the case where family and business institutions combine, the overriding driver of urgency flows from the preservation of the family ties to the firm (given limited life spans of the family members involved), which leads to the notion of succession-based urgency: *criticality in ownership succession that is based upon the temporality of family-member life span.*

Then, following the logic and pattern of Mitchell *et al.* (1997), we propose that the three family business stakeholder attributes just noted may be used to suggest the relationships that depend upon entity  $\equiv$  governance role consistency, as follows:

*Proposition 2: The family business stakeholder attributes of normative power, legacy-based legitimacy, and succession urgency are associated with (and thereby may be used to identify) family business stakeholder types.*

The next relationship that depends on entity  $\equiv$  governance role consistency is stakeholder salience, based on the attribute-salience relationship. Mitchell *et al.* (1997) advance a proposition of stakeholder salience which suggests that “. . . stakeholder salience will be positively related to the cumulative number of stakeholder attributes – power, legitimacy, and urgency – perceived by managers to be present” (ibid., 1997, p. 873). We note that this proposition then made it possible for researchers to create an ordinal-scaled stakeholder salience variable (from low to high): latent stakeholders (one attribute), expectant stakeholders (two attributes), and definitive stakeholders (all three attributes) (c.f. Mitchell *et al.* 1997, p. 873; Mitchell and Agle 1997, p. 365-370). Applying and extending this same logic in the case of family business stakeholder salience, we therefore suggest:

*Proposition 3: Family business stakeholder salience will be positively related to the cumulative number of family business stakeholder attributes – normative power, legacy-based legitimacy, and succession-based urgency – perceived to be present by the dominant coalition in a family business.*

Accordingly, we can construct a figure to name/label these unique stakeholder types and their level of salience as follows (see Figure 1); and we can also – based upon the distinction of secular from spiritual – define each stakeholder type accordingly (Table 3). (We note that to enable mapping of the detailed interconnections suggested when workplace spirituality is added to the mix, we require a diagram and type-

labels that permit us to clearly delineate these finer-grained distinctions. Like Mitchell *et al.* (1997), we alliterate these theoretical types as a mnemonic device.

{Insert Figure 1 & Table 3 about here}

As may be readily observed, Types 1, 2, 3 are suggested to have latent-level salience; Types 4, 5, and 6: expectant-level salience; with Type 7 having definitive-level salience, and Type 8 having no salience.

Those who are familiar with life in connection with a family business will likely find that this typology evokes – and possibly explains – specific and familiar circumstances. Some of the authors of this article have had extensive family business involvement; and from this background we are able to describe in a bit more detail these kinds of stakeholder situations.

In the “latent” category, we have seen all three latent sub-types. The “silent” technology mentor of a family business founder exerts normative power within the family business’ dominant coalition. The spouse of a family business founder has “suitable” legacy-based legitimacy. The consultant whose work has energized a family business into a new growth trajectory nevertheless is “sidelined” due to succession-based urgency, once the crisis has past. In each of these examples, salience to the dominant coalition is in evidence; but while some salience exists, it can be seen to be somewhat latent (lower) salience.

In the “expectant” category, we have also had experience with each of the three expectant sub-types suggested by our theory. We have observed, at the intersection of normative power and legacy-based legitimacy, that the mother (and major shareholder) of the founder’s company is salient in “significant” ways within the dominant coalition that manages the company. We have also observed how the offspring-creating intimacy of a company employee with a company founder can result in a “subversive” combination of normative power and succession-based urgency that dramatically changes the salience of that employee to the dominant coalition. And we have also observed how the spendthrift eldest son of a family business founder, whose expectations for leadership (that arise from legacy-based legitimacy and succession-based urgency) are unfulfilled, and he thus feels “slighted” when the diligent and thrifty younger son is given increasing responsibility by the dominant coalition. Here, we see higher levels of salience to



the dominant coalition; and we also see how this translates into various levels of “expectation” on the part of each stakeholder sub-type.

In the family business setting, we have also seen how the definitive presence of normative power, legacy-based legitimacy, and succession-based urgency can result in “sustaining” salience to the dominant coalition, when the previously mentioned diligent younger son – who earns normative power through hard work and effectiveness, who possesses legacy-based legitimacy through heredity, and who is highly able to respond to succession-based urgency due to youth-with-experience – can assume leadership of the family business. (And, of course, non-stakeholders, by definition are “severed” from the family business because they fail to possess or have lost all three attributes of family business stakeholder salience.)

The prototypical examples presented in Table 3 are more general than the foregoing; and based upon these we are then able to demonstrate (adding the next level of complexity as we dimensionalize the theory) how the distinction between secular and spiritual types changes a particular stakeholder’s salience along the spiritual dimension. One general example might involve a subversive stakeholder – one possessing normative power and succession urgency but lacking legacy-based legitimacy – who does not consider the spirituality of the firm to be of value will hold less salience to the dominant coalition than one who does uphold and maintain that spiritual element of the firm. Another might concern a non-family employee who sees the company as a only place to work, not something where s/he is a part of something important beyond her/ himself, would fit within this type of secular subversive stakeholder. Other comparisons are developed within Table 3. Next, we examine the spiritual identity-salience link.

### **Spiritual Identity and Family Business Workplace Spirituality Stakeholder Salience**

Based on the three foregoing propositional relationships, it is now possible to examine the relationship that depends on identity = governance role consistency; that is, on the extent to which spiritual identity affects family business workplace spirituality stakeholder salience. To do so at the level of depth required to fulfill the objectives of this paper we further explore the nature of workplace spirituality.

**Workplace spirituality.** Applying the concept of spirituality in the workplace relatively recently, scholars have attempted to define what constitutes workplace spirituality (see Table 4 for

research and the corresponding concept-development narrative). We note wide variety in their emphasis.

{Insert Table 4 about here}

For example, as noted, Conger (1994, p. 15) suggests that workplace spirituality is an “effort to see [in our work] our deeper connections to another and to the world beyond ourselves.” This perspective on workplace spirituality is based on the notion that people yearn for meaning at work. According to Conger (1994), spirit at work is in part fostered by the decline of traditional places of community (i.e., neighborhoods, churches, etc). Extensions of Conger’s (1994) work have therefore focused on the search for meaning. Hence, for example, Beyer (1999, p. 1) argues that spirituality at work has two components – meaning and belonging. These two intangibles “enhance the inner lives of individuals and give their work a spiritual dimension.” Building upon earlier work, Ashmos and Duchon (2000, p. 137) define workplace spirituality as “the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community.” Extending this definition in the context of work climate, Duchon and Plowman (2005, p. 816) define workplace spirituality as “a particular kind of psychological climate in which people view themselves as having an inner life that is nourished by meaningful work . . . in the context of a community.”

Furthermore, some scholars have conceptualized workplace spirituality as focusing on two particular aspects: (1) transcendence, namely, a sense of meaning or being called vocationally through one’s work and (2) a need for social connection or membership (Fleischman 1994; Maddock and Fulton 1998; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003). In this regard, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003, p. 13) define workplace spirituality as “a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promote employee’s experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy.” We note further examples of distinct emphasis. For example, Ashmos and Duchon (2000, p. 137) conceptualize workplace spirituality in terms of three component parts that influence meaning: (1) inner life, (2) meaningful work, and (3) community; while Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003, p. 13) define workplace spirituality in terms of two specific workplace expectations of the social actor: transcendence and social-membership need. From this, we infer that in the case of a family business, the notions of transcendence and of social identification

encapsulate the values and behaviors that have both sacred social meaning in reference to the role of deity/ a higher power in workplace life, and also sacred family meaning (cf. Belk *et al.* 1989) in the workplace itself as a relevant community.

In this paper, we have chosen to adopt Giacalone and Jurkiewicz's (2003) definition of workplace spirituality for several reasons. First, its two definitional attributes – transcendence and social-membership need – capture key elements of many definitions found in the literature such as meaning in life, and a sense of community (cf. LaPierre 1994). Second, we suggest that, compared to e.g., Ashmos and Duchon's (2000) definition, the definition proposed by Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) seems more likely to be easier to operationalize as a research construct. We suggest this because the notion of “workplace expectations” is more concrete and therefore tractable in instrumentation than, for example, notions of “inner life” etc. We also suggest this because with this definition, as Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) argue, workplace spirituality as a construct has inherent variation that depends upon levels of work-based transcendence and social identification, each of which also varies, and each of which is susceptible to measurement. Building upon this logic, we therefore propose a working definition of workplace spirituality to be: *the degree to which work-based transcendence and social identification are recognized in an organization.*

**Family business workplace spirituality stakeholder salience.** In the foregoing sections we have argued that the dominant coalition in a family business (the relevant managerial entity) responds to spiritual identity-shaped stakeholder attributes associated with that business (identity), which therefore shapes family business workplace spirituality stakeholder salience: who or what really counts to the dominant coalition (governance). As Mitchell *et al.* (1997) argue: when there are competing stakeholder claims priority is given to those claims based on key stakeholder attributes – power, legitimacy, and urgency; and we have specialized these further to reflect the family business setting. Stakeholder salience has been defined to be *the degree to which managers give priority to competing stakeholder claims* (Mitchell *et al.*, 1997, p. 854). Herein we further argue, that where priority-setting within a dominant coalition is influenced by workplace

spirituality (as defined above), we may therefore define workplace spirituality stakeholder salience to be: *the degree to which priority of competing stakeholder claims is given based upon the stakeholder attributes of normative power, legacy-based legitimacy, and success-based urgency as each is shaped by workplace spirituality: work-based transcendence and social identification.*

This definition of workplace spirituality stakeholder salience suggests the following definitional boundaries. First, we distinguish workplace spirituality from workplace religion or religiosity. This means that our framework will not explicitly be constrained to concern only a theological system of beliefs, ritual prayers, rites and ceremonies and related formalized practices and ideas as they apply to a family business (cf. Fry *et al.* 2011). Thus, for example, we do not address worship behaviors in family business. Second, while acknowledging that workplace spirituality is an employee-focused concept, our intention in this paper (as noted previously) is to broaden the scope beyond employee-centricity to include other stakeholders, and other levels of analysis. Third, this definition of workplace spirituality stakeholder salience differs from stakeholder salience in that it broadens the notion of those who prioritize competing stakeholder claims (Mitchell *et al.* 1997) from managers to the (intendedly more-inclusive) dominant coalition. Consequently, this article assumes that the composition of the focal actor of stakeholder prioritization may vary by context. For example, in the case of family business we maintain that the dominant coalition (cf. Cyert and March 1963) will play a key role in prioritizing competing stakeholder claims because it has high density and high centrality within the organization (Rowley 1997); but we do not prescribe membership in this coalition. Finally, research on family business supports the idea that family businesses often have goals other than traditional economically-oriented goals (e.g., Chrisman *et al.* 2012; Gomez-Mejia *et al.* 2007; Milton 2008). These goals usually refer to the socioemotional wealth of the family members (i.e., ability to exercise authority, satisfaction of needs of belonging, affect, and intimacy, and the legacy of the family values among other things) (Gomez-Mejia *et al.* 2007). Such differential goals imply that family business workplace organization might be different from non-family business organization (Olson *et al.* 2003), with work-based transcendence and social identification being more relevant for the family businesses.

We therefore reason that if the level of stakeholder spiritual identity is associated with the extent of the family business stakeholder attributes of normative power, legacy-based legitimacy, and succession

urgency; and if these attributes – as shaped by workplace spirituality – are associated with both family business stakeholder types and family business stakeholder salience; then it follows both logically and according to the notion of identity = governance role consistency that:

*Proposition 4: Stakeholder spiritual identity is associated with family business stakeholder salience, and in particular, with family business workplace-spirituality stakeholder salience.*

## DISCUSSION

Through an in-depth literature review, and by using a stakeholder salience logic that parallels Mitchell *et al.* (1997), we have advanced an argument which suggests that stakeholder spiritual identity, through stakeholder attributes as shaped by workplace spirituality, affects family business workplace-spirituality stakeholder salience. In this discussion section we discuss the contributions, limitations, and possibilities for future research of this theorizing.

### Contributions

As noted in the Introduction section of this paper, we have focused primarily on the development of four contributions to the literature on family business workplace spirituality: (1) frameworks for future use, (2) prototypical descriptions and vignettes for finer-grained distinction, (3) multidimensionality implications for exploring the somewhat unexpected or under-considered, and (4) family-business-specific effects for workplace spirituality on outcomes that arise from inherent family ties in businesses.

**Frameworks.** In this paper – following the approach suggested by Mitchell *et al.* (1997) – we have developed an 8-part framework for possible use in teaching, research, and decision-making, which we hope may assist scholars and practitioners in family business stakeholder research to explore further the practical processes of prioritization in the unique and important context of family business with and without workplace spirituality influences (see Figure 1 and Table 3). In our experience, models such as the one presented in Figure 1 provide students with a visual and practical means whereby the somewhat abstract nuances of stakeholder salience can be applied – for example in case-based teaching. We also note how the general stakeholder salience model has been applied widely in the research literature, both for theory development and for empirical testing; and we suggest that – by making the family business stakeholder

types explicit – future research, including research concerning family business workplace spirituality stakeholder salience, may be similarly aided. And, as discussed in the next subsection, we also observe that effectiveness in judgment-based decision-making can also be enhanced through use of our model.

**Prototypical descriptions and vignettes.** With prototypical description and vignettes that together capture the nature and effects of the finer-grained distinctions (Table 5), we also dimensionalize our model to help the reader to better assess elements of the family business that are essentially contestable (cf. Gallie 1955), in the sense that each requires “appraisive” judgment, is “internally complex,” is “variously describable,” and is “open in character” (1955, p. 171-172). For example, there is likely to be some variation in how to estimate the costs and benefits of the decision and operations systems that might be affected by workplace spirituality. Our model suggests that criteria for the cost/benefit estimation process will be guided by the extent to which a secular or spiritual identity in the dominant coalition, and among the stakeholders in a family business (e.g. level of connection to something greater than itself), translates into family business stakeholder salience. Also, we suggest that there will be inherent variation in expectations for appraising success/failure, performance, etc. in light of workplace spirituality; and we propose that – through the lens of family business workplace-spirituality stakeholder salience – the nature of these judgments (e.g., their criteria) may be better predicted. Additionally, we note that some of the previously-mentioned idiosyncrasies inherent in the family business setting (such as non-economic goals and socioemotional wealth, effects of unique family history, intentions for transgenerational sustainability, and altruistic tendencies) are also essentially contestable. As such, the model we present permits readers to recognize how the lens of spiritual identity can shape the criteria used for goal setting, assessments of socioemotional well being, etc. through making explicit the salience vantage points of family business stakeholders. Consequently, we believe that our conceptual analysis will permit unstated assumptions to be surfaced, and for the inexplicit in family business governance to become explicit according to the identity ≡ governance logic we have presented and utilized in theory development.

{Insert Table 5 about here}

**Multidimensionality.** Through our theory development, we demonstrate the multidimensionality of workplace spirituality as it influences family business stakeholder attributes (Tables 3 and 5). This

multidimensionality enables us to pinpoint factors that may influence the potential downside/dark-side of workplace spirituality, where it may negatively shape stakeholder relationships both within and without the family business dominant coalitions. While it might be hoped that the presence of workplace-spirituality stakeholder salience would lead to “good” outcomes, we also note that each of the family business stakeholder attributes, as shaped by sensitivity to spiritual identity, are susceptible to misuse that leads to harm. For example, one of the authors of this paper, as the manager of a trucking business, reports that the term “truckers for Jesus” became code that signaled a higher probability of a “wolf in sheep’s clothing,” where the term was used to reduce vigilance in security and promote trust. Our point? Due to the multidimensionality of workplace spirituality, this notion may be used for harm vs. help.

In this vein, we suggest that the model we have developed may also be helpful to scholars who wish to examine other underexplored corners of the family business/ workplace spirituality/ stakeholder salience interface (e.g. [non-exhaustively] codependence among various stakeholders within power coalitions; community engagement, job creation, and economic development prioritization as a reflection of the interplay between priorities that arise from stakeholder spiritual identity and prevailing community values; family member addiction and recovery responsibilities assumed by the firm; litigiousness levels among stakeholders depending upon the stakeholder spiritual identity/stakeholder salience, linkage, etc.). Future theorizing and related empirical research may, we suggest, fruitfully explore propositions that relate family-business workplace-spirituality stakeholder salience to these important questions.

**Family-business-specific effects.** As previously noted, there are several family-business-specific activities that are more constrained due to inherent family ties (such as succession planning, the management of non-family employees, and the maintaining of effective relationships among the unique set of family business stakeholders) that may be affected by family business workplace spirituality stakeholder salience. For example in the case of succession planning, we can foresee how a stakeholder analysis to assess the various expectations and likely motivations of the various stakeholder types – in both secular and spiritual contexts – might prove to be illuminating as *sustainable* succession plans (those that last because they are supported by the stakeholders) are formulated. In the case of non-family employees, we envision that a more-complete understanding of the requisite cognitive map (cf. Mitchell *et al.* 2003), as

specialized to reflect the secular and spiritual landscape as it appears in spiritual identity, could be forthcoming. And, with reference to family businesses in general, akin to the manner in which *guanxi* relationships are expected to affect and be affected by access to resources and stakeholder salience (respectively) (cf. Su *et al.* 2007), we can anticipate that the deeper understanding of spiritual identity, stakeholder attributes, and family business workplace spirituality stakeholder salience can aid in the creation and maintaining of effective relationships with among family business stakeholders.

### **Future research**

To consider the further application of our theory, we suggest four areas for future research that flow from the following logic. Our examination of workplace spirituality stakeholder salience suggests that workplace spirituality stakeholder salience varies depending on the degree to which competing stakeholder claims are prioritized – as stakeholder attributes shaped by workplace spirituality. By extension, then, understanding the salience of stakeholders, including workplace spirituality stakeholder salience, can be useful as decision makers in an organization seek to sustain a beneficial relationship with these stakeholders. We draw from this extension the implication that stakeholder satisfaction may be more likely to occur when workplace spirituality stakeholder salience is well aligned with stakeholder expectations. In the case of workplace spirituality stakeholder salience, in particular, stakeholder satisfaction tends to be realized when stakeholder claims shaped by “transcendence and social identification” (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003, p. 13) are effectively addressed. As we develop implications for future research each of the following areas we have identified might take this perspective into account – such that we can envision this research stream (as it develops) investigating some of the relevant issues in family business and stakeholder research, and also more-broadly, issues in our current society, which include: (1) the broader implications of kinship research in the family business context, (2) family business values research, (3) social justice, and possibly even (4) the social health epidemic concerning, for example, increasing levels of psychological depression worldwide.

**Kinship research.** The first area where we see the possibility for future research centers around the family business literature in particular. As Chrisman and colleagues (2011) observe, little research related to kinship has been extended beyond the familial bonds of shared bloodline. As we link family



business to the idea of belonging to something greater, future studies could examine the extent to which non-family employees feel a part of the family as linked through the medium of workplace spirituality, thus extending Mitchell *et al.* (2003). Peredo (2003) suggests that alternative forms of kin-based business are “marked by social, cultural, and religious rituals of incorporation” (2003, p. 398). We propose that family businesses likewise involve such rituals of inclusion. Looking to practical applications, we suggest that, as forms of spiritual identity are recognized by non-family employees within a family firm, such employees may, for example, be able to impact their effectiveness by greater cognizance of the implications of their workplace spirituality stakeholder salience to the dominant coalition. For example, employees who have felt passed over by less capable family members might be found to utilize elements of workplace spirituality stakeholder salience to increase their future opportunities within the firm. This may also impact the extent to which family firms could survive into future generations without giving up the family values that drive their spiritual identities – and we suggest that this is another empirical question that needs research attention. Future studies which examine non-family employees who have risen within the ranks of a family firm could shed further light on the extent to which they have done so by acknowledging and embracing elements of workplace spirituality.

**Family business values research.** The second area which we suggest for future research is the relationship between family business workplace spirituality, legacy, and family values. Research in this area could help to provide possible solutions to problems related to generational change and aging of the population, which is increasing as a demographically important issue confronting global society (e.g., George *et al.* 2012; Kanfer and Ackerman 2004; McGrahan 2012a; McGahan 2012b; Smola and Sutton 2002). Some studies have shown that differences across generations, when not managed well, can lead to work place conflict (e.g., Kopperschmidt 2000; O’Bannon 2001; Smola and Sutton 2002). Among the explanations for why conflict is present one can find that work values tend to be different among generations (Smola and Sutton 2002). For instance, Smola and Sutton (2002) found that Generation X-ers (people born between 1965–1977) tended to be less loyal to the company and more ‘me’ oriented than Baby Boomers (people born between 1946–1964). We foresee interesting and practical avenues for further exploration using the idea of family business workplace spirituality as a mechanism to explain variations in

legacy and family values and as they relate to generation-based workplace conflict. Thus, future research, drawing from psychology and the study of demographics, might therefore productively explore how increasing salience through family workplace spirituality might implicate family values and thereby intergenerational workplace conflict.

**Social justice research.** The third possible area we suggest for future research is the possible relationship between workplace spirituality stakeholder salience and social justice. For example, various stakeholders demand organizations take action toward greater corporate social responsibility, which includes the amelioration of social injustice (Aguilera *et al.* 2007; Matten and Crane 2005; Palazzo and Scherer 2008). We observe that transcendence and social identification may possibly be related to the amelioration of social injustice because employees at spirituality-centered workplace are may, for example, be more likely to contribute to formulating a stakeholder culture that is conducive to concerns for others (Jones *et al.* 2007), an important element of workplace spirituality (Ashmos and Duchon 2000; Duchon and Plowman 2005, p. 816). According to this logic, we anticipate that workplace spirituality stakeholder salience, when managed to affect stakeholder satisfaction may help to positively impact social justice; and we call for further research to investigate this assertion.

**Epidemic depression research.** The final area of potential future research we suggest as we think more broadly, centers on (for example) the exploration of a possible relationship between workplace spirituality stakeholder salience and social health: in particular, the epidemic increase in levels of depression within societies (George *et al.* 2012; McGhahan 2012a). As the third most prevalent disability in the world (The World Health Organization, 2004), this epidemic has significant health and economic implications. Depression, which has been linked to chronic health conditions, unhealthy behaviors, and suicides (Weissman and Klerman 1992), impairs a person's ability to function (Pratt and Brody 2003). Depression has an economic impact on society as depression leads to loss of productivity (Stewart 2003) and absenteeism (Adler *et al.* 2006). Depression can lead a 35% decrease in personal income over a lifetime due to a higher likelihood of less education, not getting married and decreased productivity (Kessler *et al.* 1998; Smith and Smith 2010). In all, the costs related to depression in the United States exceed \$83 billion a year (Greenberg *et al.* 2003).

Several scholars in prior decades link this epidemic increase in depression to the loss of spirituality in society (cf., Brink 1993; Frankl 1978; May 1975; Seligman 1990; Westgate 1996) but this linkage has not yet been sufficiently explored either specifically in the family business setting, or in the stakeholder sense. The reduction in spirituality in modern society has been attributed to the replacement of time spent building relationships with traditional support systems like extended family, places of worship, and communities with time spent at work which increases the importance of workplace spirituality (Jurkiewicz and Giacalone 2004). We wonder whether the notion that increasingly, people now look for spirituality at their workplace (Neck and Millman 1994) might suggest that, by shaping stakeholder claims and the work of the organization according to transcendence and social identity, the organization (especially the family business organization) provides very specific types of meaning to organizational members, which may reduce the members' vulnerability to depression. In this sense, family businesses provide a unique context where traditional spiritual support (e.g. through the creation of extended spirituality-based meaning-family) overlaps a modern source of meaning (work). Future research that explores the relationship among workplace spirituality salience, depression, and family business can helpfully address such questions. Hence, we suggest this to be an area for multidisciplinary research. However, such research, and also the ideas presented in this paper are also subject to several limitations, which we now discuss.

### **Limitations**

The theory development presented in this paper is limited in at least three ways. First, from the standpoint of scope. Second, from the standpoint of focus. And third, as theory vs. empirics.

**Scope.** Throughout this paper we have endeavored to note, as the definition of each construct utilized in the propositions has been developed, the research consequences of such definitions – particularly as they affect the boundaries of their use. At a more general level, we also acknowledge that our theorizing has been developed and presented within the stakeholder salience stream of research. This has been intentional: so that the reader may have the opportunity to see the primary mechanisms and assertions of this literature analyzed and applied specifically to the case of family-business workplace-spirituality stakeholder salience. As a result, the theory is limited to questions of stakeholder salience and it

does not address other questions of import within the stakeholder literature (e.g. normative stakeholder theory, value creation stakeholder theory, etc.) as they might apply to workplace spirituality.

**Focus.** Additionally, our theoretical examination is limited to questions of salience as they relate to goal setting and decision making by the dominant coalition in the family business. This has also been intentional, because one limitation of general stakeholder salience theory has been that it focuses on “managers” as those who assess and determine stakeholder salience. This, as we have argued, is both impractical and imprecise in the case of family business; and hence this substitution is needed. However, the use of a dominant coalition as the “subject” of our examination also has its weaknesses, not the least of which being that it is somewhat amorphous, variable, and hard to pin down (cf. Cyert and March 1963; Scott 1987). There is also the possibility that, unless great care is taken, the salience of “significant” stakeholders (figure 1) will end up being decided upon by the “significant” stakeholders: an “eye of the beholder” effect with potential circularity risks. But despite this weakness, we still maintain that this self-definition problem is avoidable, because “significant” stakeholder salience is, itself, a derivation: a combination that results from the joint effects of two attributes: normative power, and legacy-based legitimacy – each of which is susceptible to assessment without necessarily requiring reference to any dominant coalition. Rather, the notion of the dominant coalition is aggregational, in that it may or may not include a particular stakeholder type specified in our theoretical development.

**Theory v. empirics.** Finally, we acknowledge that in the empirical sense, and despite our inclusion of some observed behaviors consistent with our theory, this is “just theory,” and that the relationships we propose are of scientific necessity subject to testing. We therefore encourage the operationalization and testing that our theorizing implies. Our hope is that we have provided sufficient definition for the constructs involved, that the necessary instrumentation, measurement, and analysis methods will be relatively easier to develop.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

In this paper, we have suggested that the spiritual identity of members of a family business can impact the salience of its stakeholders when viewed from the perspective of the complex coalition of decision makers that comprise the leadership of a family business. Utilizing stakeholder salience theory

and role theory, we have examined the theoretical relationship among spiritual identity, stakeholder attributes, and family business stakeholder salience, creating a model that reveals the multidimensionality of workplace spirituality and the need for finer-grained distinctions in stakeholder attributes, to better represent the complexities inherent in a family business context. In sum, we suggest that the extent to which a firm develops and maintains workplace spirituality can have both positive and negative consequences on firm governance (and, we surmise, performance as well) according to the multi-lens and interchangeable theoretical and analytical structure (entity  $\equiv$  identity  $\equiv$  governance  $\equiv$  entity) that we have invoked for theory development in this paper. And, as we have tried to highlight, there are several important yet unexplored avenues for research that are in need of attention in future research. It is our hope that the theoretical approach we have developed will contribute to this pursuit.

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Table 1: Definitions of Spirituality 1975 – 2005

Reference	Definition
Tart (1975, p. 4)	The vast realm of human potential with ultimate purposes, with higher entities, with God, with life, with compassion, with purpose
McKnight (1984, p. 142)	The animating force that inspires one toward purposes that are beyond one's self and that give one's life meaning and direction
Shafranske and Gorsuch (1984, p. 231)	A transcendent dimension within human experience...discovered in moments in which the individual questions the meaning of personal existence and attempts to place the self within a broader ontological context
Mauritzen (1988, p. 118)	The human dimension that transcends the biological, psychological, and social aspects of living
Elkins (1988, p. 10)	A way of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension and that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, life, and whatever one considers to be the ultimate
Benner (1989, p. 20)	Our response to a deep and mysterious human yearning for self-transcendence and surrender, a yearning to find our place
Schneiders (1989, p. 684)	The experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives
Dale (1991, p. 5)	that attraction and movement of the human person toward the divine
Emblen (1992, p. 45)	A personal life principle which animates a transcendent quality of relationships with God
Roof (1993, p. 64)	Spirituality gives expression to the being that is in us; it has to do with feelings, with the power that comes from within, with knowing our deepest selves and what is sacred to us, with, as Matthew Fox says, "heart-knowledge."
Chandler and Holden (1992)	Pertaining to the innate capacity to, and tendency to seek to, transcend one's current locus of centrality, with which transcendence involves increased knowledge and love
Armstrong (1995, p. 3)	The presence of a relationship with a higher power that affects the way in which one operates in the world
Bregman and Thierman (1995)	How the individual lives meaningfully with a higher power that affects the way in which one operates in the universe
Wong (1998, p. 364)	That which involves ultimate and personal truths

Reference	Definition
Fort (1997, p. 6)	A connecting experience with God
Larson et al. (1988, p. 22)	"subjective feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred
Mitroff and Denton (1999, p. 83)	The basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others, and the entire universe
Delbecq (1999, p. 345)	The unique and personal inner experience of the search for the fullest personal development through participation into the transcendent mystery
Barnett et al. (1999, p. 563)	A process of self-enlightenment...[regarding] innermost sources of energy,...deepest personal values, a sense of ...transcendent purpose in life
Emmons (2000)	The personal expression of ultimate concern
Lewis and Geroy (2000, p. 684)	The inner experience of the individual when he or she senses a beyond, especially evidence by the effect of this experience on his or her behavior when he or she actively attempts to harmonize his or her life with the beyond
Bierly et al. (2000, p. 605)	Moral and emotional in nature, which involves an understanding and appreciation of one's position in the universe, one's soul, and the role of a God
Hill et al. (2000, p. 68)	"subjective feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred", which is referred to as "a divine being, divine object, ultimate reality, or Ultimate Truth as perceived by the individual"
Nash and McLennan (2001, p. 17)	"access to the sacred force that impels life
Hart and Brady (2005, p. 411)	"self-awareness regarding one's basic psychological nature" – from a decidedly archetypal perspective

Table 2: Spiritual Identity Orientation – Content, Structure, Type

Author/ Year	Spiritual identity / self (definition)	Orientation: Content, Structure, Type
Zinnbauer <i>et al.</i> (1997)	"Whether one considers oneself religious or spiritual depends upon the meaning and relevance of these terms to members of a given religious or ideological group. Thus, to accurately measure religiousness and spirituality it becomes necessary to consider the system of beliefs or worldviews of the individuals or groups studied." (p. 562)	Content (what is included)
Wink and Dillon (2002)	"The self's existential search for ultimate meaning through an individualized understanding of the sacred." (p. 79)	Content
Hill <i>et al.</i> (2002)	Spirituality: "The feel, thoughts, experiences, and behaviors that arise from a search of the sacred. The term "search" refers to attempts to identify, articulate, maintain, or transform. The term "sacred" refers to a divine being, divine object, Ultimate Reality, or Ultimate Truth as perceived by the individual" (p. 66)	Content
Weaver and Agle (2002)	Three constructs: religion self-identity ("Taken together and internalized, these role expectations constitute a person's identity as a member of a specific religion.")(81), religious identity salience ("In short, besides considering an individual's apparent ties to a particular set of religious beliefs and practices, we also can consider the degree to which that religion constitutes a central part of self-identity") (81), religious motivational orientation (intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations) (p. 88)	Content and structure (dimensions)
Poll and Smith (2003)	"sense of spiritual identity, an individual's belief that she or he is an eternal being and connected to God." (p. 129)	Content
Sheep (2006)	"Spirituality (which would include, but not be limited to, the narrower term, religion) has been generally defined in the psychology of religion literature as "subjective feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred," where sacred is defined broadly as referring to "a divine being, divine object, ultimate reality, or Ultimate Truth as perceived by the individual." (p. 358)	Content
Kiesling <i>et al.</i> (2006)	"we define spiritual identity as a persistent sense of self that addresses ultimate questions about the nature, purpose, and meaning of life, resulting in behaviors that are consonant with the individual's core values." (p. 1269). Three types of identity status: foreclosed, in moratorium, and achieved.	Content, types

Author/ Year	Spiritual identity / self (definition)	Orientation: Content, Structure, Type
Klenke (2007)	Spiritual identity system: "The spiritual architecture of this identity system is built on three pillars or sub-identities: self-disclosure, self-transcendence, and self-sacrifice." (p. 84). Self-disclosure: "the process of revealing one's inner self to others" (p. 84). Self-transcendence: "includes components such as creative self-forgetfulness, transpersonal identification, and spiritual acceptance" (p. 85). Self sacrifice: ". . . the total/partial abandonment, and or permanent/temporary postponement of personal interests, privileges, and welfare" (p. 86).	Content and structure
Macdonald (2009)	"three levels of spirituality with spiritual experience and religiousness comprising "primary" spirituality (i.e., core causal factors that extend beyond the psychological sense of self but influence its formation and functioning), spiritual and paranormal beliefs making up "ego structural" spirituality (i.e., core cognitive schema that define the limits of ego structure and functions), and existential well-being contributing to "ego-evaluative" spirituality (i.e., the evaluation of self in terms of perceived effectiveness in coping with stressors)" (p. 96-97)	Content, structure
Gall <i>et al.</i> (2011)	"Spirituality was primarily viewed as an integral part of one's identity and the personal experience the transcendent whether it is defined traditionally as God or a higher power, or in more secular terms as unity with the greater world or mystery. In contrast, religiousness is an external tool through which individuals can access their spirituality and relationship to the divine." (p. 158)	Content

Table 3: Definitions of both Secular and Spiritual Stakeholder by Type

Term	Definitions
<b>1 SILENT</b>	A Silent stakeholder possesses normative power (e.g. from symbolic or obligational resources), but lacks both legacy-based legitimacy and succession urgency.
1a Silent-secular	Silent-secular stakeholders possess some degree of normative power through symbolic resources such as family-name recognition in a brand, but this power is not utilized.
1b Silent-spiritual	Silent-spiritual stakeholders draw their normative power from symbolic sources which link to elements of workplace spirituality such as transcendence and social identification. An example might be attitudes which come from embracing company values (feeling connected to something larger: the group), but which are minimally manifest.
<b>2 SUITABLE</b>	Suitable stakeholders are defined by hereditary rights that underpin legacy-based legitimacy, e.g., they belong to the owner family, but lack both the normative power and succession urgency that would make them more than minimally salient to the dominant coalition in the family business.
2a Suitable-secular	Suitable-secular stakeholders have hereditary connection to family firm ownership but lack spiritual connection to the transcendence or social identification elements of family business workplace spirituality. For example, a family member who does not necessarily uphold and promote the family belief-system or reputation but may still possess hereditary rights to make legacy-based claims on the firm without being spiritually connected.
2b Suitable-spiritual	Suitable-spiritual stakeholders have legacy-based legitimacy from the family connection and also evidence workplace spirituality. While they lack normative power and succession urgency (e.g. as would a younger child of the owner family who may or may not have come to work for the firm) their legacy-based legitimacy flows also from their belief in and support of the role of a higher power (e.g. faith), and of sacred family business values.
<b>3 SIDELINED</b>	Sidelined stakeholders are defined by urgent claims they are unable to satisfy because they lack legacy-based legitimacy and/or normative power.
3a Sidelined-secular	Sidelined-secular stakeholders of a family business are defined by the criticality and immediacy of ownership transfer concerns. But, perhaps by both not being a family member and not attending to the spiritual stance of other stakeholders, sidelined secular stakeholders are easily ignored.
3b Sidelined-spiritual	Sidelined-spiritual stakeholders of a family business are also defined by the criticality and immediacy of ownership transfer concerns, but in addition, they share the sacred values of the family firm. However, their needs often go unnoted and unmet because they lack the normative power and legacy-based rights to command greater attention.
<b>4 SIGNIFICANT</b>	Significant stakeholders in a family business are defined by their possession of both normative power and legacy-based legitimacy, but a lack of urgency.
4a Significant-secular	Significant-secular stakeholders do not share values of the firm rooted in workplace spirituality. Family members who have normative power, but who struggle with the importance placed on some sacred beliefs and/or values fit this type. An example might be a third or fourth generation family member who places no value on the family name, family-firm ethos, etc. but simply wants to draw on the family fortune. (Note: this distinction might help to explain why less than 10% of family businesses survive into the third generation (cf., Birley, 1986; Ward, 1987; Le Breton-Miller et al. 2004).
4b Significant-spiritual	Significant-spiritual stakeholders maintain (and likely define) the values that drive the workplace spirituality of the firm based upon the higher-power-based and business-conduct-based beliefs and practices that are considered to be sacred. Examples of significant-spiritual stakeholders might include family owner-managers who have a strong faith-based credo of conduct.



Term	Definitions
<b>5 SUBVERSIVE</b>	Subversive stakeholders possess normative power and succession-based urgency, but lack the legacy-based legitimacy that might encourage more direct and open interaction to address critical and time-based claims.
5a Subversive-secular	Subversive-secular stakeholders by definition do not embrace the perceptions of the sacred that drive workplace spirituality in the family firm. Their normative power and succession-based urgency would suggest their demands on the firm (in keeping with their status as a dangerous stakeholder from Mitchell et al., 1997) would be deemed illegitimate by the dominant coalition. Such a stakeholder might therefore consider coercion/subversion to be reasonable, and may threaten the values of the firm in order to satisfy their demands.
5b Subversive-spiritual	Subversive-spiritual stakeholders may share the values considered sacred by the firm, and as a result may likely make their demands on the firm through what they see as reasonable appeals to those values. In this way, subversive stakeholders of both secular/spiritual types might utilize some form of workplace spirituality appeal to overcome their lack of legacy-based legitimacy and attempt to temporarily move into the dominant coalition. Their lack of legacy-based legitimacy precludes the chance that subversive-spiritual stakeholders might remain in such a position over the long run, however.
<b>6 SLIGHTED</b>	Slighted stakeholders in a family business have legacy-based legitimacy as well as succession-urgent needs, but they lack the normative power to fully enforce their claims, and as such can be overlooked.
6a Slighted-secular	Slighted-secular stakeholders do not embrace the perceptions of the sacred that drive workplace spirituality in the family firm, which may help to explain their lack of normative power. Because normative power (fame or shame) is symbolically created, maintained, and conferred, (e.g. these stakeholders may have caused harm to the family name and lost favor with the members of the dominant coalition), they forfeit the family business power needed to force others to meet claims. Such a stakeholder might utilize workplace spirituality as a tool to gain power, perhaps by threatening to expose contrary facts regarding firm behavior relative to its values; by feigning the adoption and compliance with them; or by alignment with those with normative power.
6b Slighted-spiritual	Slighted-spiritual stakeholders hold the spiritual values of the firm, while not having risen to command normative power. Hence their urgent claims go unmet despite legacy-based legitimacy. By demonstrating their appreciation for workplace spirituality, they may seek alliances with members of the dominant coalition. This stakeholder type demonstrates how workplace spirituality can be used to change other attributes (i.e., normative power).
<b>7 SUSTAINING</b>	Sustaining stakeholders are definitive in salience, because they possess all three stakeholder attributes: normative power, legacy-based legitimacy, and succession-based urgency. The Significant stakeholder group moves into and out of this stakeholder type depending upon the criticality and temporality (urgency) of their claims.
7a Sustaining-secular	Sustaining-secular stakeholders do not participate in workplace spirituality. Their urgent needs might have some element of shedding this values system in favor of some other way of doing business they see as more profitable or less costly to maintain. This group likely sees the spiritual identity of the firm as somewhat of a hindrance to the business.
7b Sustaining-spiritual	Sustaining-spiritual stakeholders participate in workplace spirituality; and – as members of the dominant coalition – they use their definitive position in the firm to make decisions and to set priorities. Uniquely, these decisions might relate to removing threats to the workplace spirituality (e.g., threats to the family-business sacred), or in making changes in support of these values.
<b>8 SEVERED</b>	Severed (non-) stakeholders lack any element of salience relevant to the firm.
8a Severed-secular	Severed-secular (non-) stakeholders are unconnected to the values of the firm. Their presence in this group suggests they do not engage the firm.
8b Severed-spiritual	Severed-spiritual (non-) stakeholders admire or honor that which the family business values as sacred; but only from afar. They may appreciate the existence of the firm but do not influence or are they influenced by the firm in any material way.

Table 4: Definitions of Workplace Spirituality 1994 – 2008

Source	Definition	Developmental Narrative
Conger (1994, p. 15)	"...to see our deeper connections to one another and to the world beyond ourselves."	Search for meaning identified as definitional component
Beyer (1999, p. 1)	"... meaning and belonging (that) enhance the inner lives of individuals..."	Belonging identified as additional component
Ashmos and Duchon (2000, p. 137)	"the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community	Meaning and belonging integrated to propose a new definition
Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003, p. 13)	"a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promote employee's experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy"	A new definition proposed with key definitional attributes – transcendence and social identification
Duchon and Plowman (2005, p. 816)	"a particular kind of psychological climate in which people view themselves as having an inner life that is nourished by meaningful work and takes place in the context of a community"	Ashmos and Duchon (2000) extended in the context of work climate
Kolodinsky et al. (2008, p. 466-467)	"...the incorporation of one's own spiritual ideas and values in the work setting"	A three dimensional approach of spirituality (personal, organizational, and interactive) proposed, clarifying the level of analysis issues; and provides new avenues for future research
	"...a more macro-level view of the organization's spiritual climate or culture...as reflecting an individual's perception of the spiritual values within an organizational setting"	
	"...reflects the interaction between an individual's personal spiritual values and the organization's spiritual values"	

**Table 5: Eight Vignettes of Family Business Stakeholders with a Spiritual Element**

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1. **Silent stakeholders.** The relevant attribute of the Silent stakeholder in a family business is normative power stemming from symbolic resources such as love and acceptance. Within the spiritual context, this stakeholder would impose his or her will on the firm in ways that seek to maintain the moral code agreed upon by the family. An example might be a manager who is also a brother to the owner manager. This relationship with the owner gives normative power to perform his duties as a manager. S/he remains in this stakeholder type if s/he does not have hereditary rights to claim legacy-based legitimacy – those would be expected to pass to the children of the owner – and if s/he has no concern of further advancing a specific agenda within the firm, s/he lacks urgency.
  2. **Suitable stakeholders.** Suitable stakeholders in a family business possess an element of legacy-based legitimacy by being part of the ownership family, but they lack power to exercise those rights and urgency to seek after them. An example here might be a child of the owner who has no position in the firm. Members of the firm still must acknowledge the owner's children, but without a position within the firm, they lack the attributes of power or urgency to garner a higher level of salience. Within the context of spiritual elements, a Suitable stakeholder would not exercise inappropriate demands on the firm by expecting employees to expend resources not approved by the owner, as that would go against the values system that guides the business.
  3. **Sidelined stakeholders.** Sidelined stakeholders are marked by a present need that they see as unfulfilled, but which they have no normative power to demand and no hereditary right to claim. A manager who has maintained the company's moral code over her years of service, but who has continually been passed over for promotion by family members would fit into this category. She has demonstrated loyalty and honor, but others have been favored over her.
  4. **Significant stakeholders.** Significant stakeholders form the central leadership of the family business, such as the owner family members who hold the highest positions of authority within the firm. If they lack of urgency in their claims, however, they would still not move into a central position of salience. A soon-to-retire president of the firm would fit within this group, as s/he is no longer focusing on making specific demands, as long as s/he can see that the firm s/he is leaving behind will not damage his good name by a change in policy.
  5. **Subversive stakeholders.** Subversive stakeholders possess the normative power of being loved and accepted within the firm's leadership, and the urgency to want their needs met, but they lack the legacy-based legitimacy to become a definitive stakeholder. A brother-in-law who has committed time in service maintaining the firm's good name through his actions, but who knows s/he can never overtake the favorite son in a position of authority, would fit here.
  6. **Slighted stakeholders.** Slighted stakeholders have urgent needs, and they have legacy-based legitimacy to claim them, but they lack the power to force others to meet their demands. Younger siblings who wants to one day become CEO would fit into this group early in their respective careers. They might feel their sacrifices for the sake of maintaining the image of the firm go unnoticed, but they would continue to make them in keeping the values of the firm.
  7. **Sustaining stakeholders.** Sustaining stakeholders occupy the central position of salience for members of the family firm. A newly appointed CEO who wants to implement new policies that will further strengthen the family's good name would fit in this category. He or she has all three elements of salience and make them from a position of moral authority as they act in ways that maintain or further edify the values system guiding the firm.
  8. **Severed stakeholders.** Severed stakeholders are those who have no normative power, no legacy-based legitimacy, and no desire to move up within a firm. A non-family member trusted assistant who shows up, works hard, but has no desire to ever be promoted would fit within this category. Many family businesses rely on employees who enjoy working in a climate where they feel trusted and valued by the family, but who know they will remain in their position as a function of the dynamics of the firm.
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FIGURE 1  
Family Business Stakeholder Types and Salience

