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## **A Holistic and Multidimensional View of Spirituality and Values:**

### **The Case of Global Gulen Network**

#### **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this paper is to explore the dimensions and characteristics of values and spirituality in organizations in Gulen network. This study is based on a qualitative case study of seven selected Gulen organizations and utilizes a triangulation of various qualitative research methods: 32 qualitative interviews, participant observation, multi-sited ethnography and documental analysis. Gulen network is a unique case of global social innovation based on spirituality in a number of respects. Owing to the principles of diversity, love and dialog, Gulen enjoys voluntary participation of people from different backgrounds, ideologies, nations, classes, races and faiths throughout the world. Gulen network proposes: a) a model of spiritual partnership and networking based on shared passion and idealism, b) a global agenda for interfaith and intercultural love, cooperation, and dialog, c) a multidimensional view of universal values and spirituality in the workplace, d) a unique case revealing insights for integrating management, religion and spirituality.

#### **Keywords:**

Spirituality, values, multidimensional, dialog, social innovation

The objective of this paper is to explore the dimensions and characteristics of values and spirituality in organizations in Gulen network. I define Gulen network as the group of educational and non-profit organizations inspired by the ideas of Fethullah Gulen; one of the leading contemporary Sufi Muslim thinkers in the world. Gulen network is composed of more than 500 schools and NGOs throughout the globe and it represents an international movement exemplifying social innovation in the areas of education and international dialog. This study aims to explore the nature, forms and dimensions of peaceful values and spirituality in organizations operating in Gulen network.

This study is based on a qualitative case study of seven selected Gulen organizations and utilizes a triangulation of various qualitative research methods: 32 qualitative interviews, participant observation, multi-sited ethnography and documental analysis. Gulen network is a unique case of global social innovation based on spirituality in a number of respects. Owing to the principles of diversity, love and dialog, Gulen enjoys voluntary participation of people from different backgrounds, ideologies, nations, classes, races and faiths throughout the world. Gulen network proposes: a) a model of spiritual partnership and networking based on shared passion and idealism, b) a global agenda for interfaith and intercultural love, cooperation, and dialog, c) a multidimensional view of universal values and spirituality in the workplace, d) a unique case revealing insights for integrating management, religion and spirituality.

There is an increasing need for comprehensive and expanded theory in order to increase our understanding of values and spirituality in profit and nonprofit organizations. This paper is built on the assumption that research on spirituality in organizations can benefit significantly from perspectives outside the North American context. Although Gulen network is potentially a very rich source of data on spirituality, values and organizations; there has been very little

research done on organizations in Gulen network. This study aims to explore the nature, forms and dimensions of peaceful values and spirituality in organizations operating in Gulen network which place a heavy emphasis on a set of universal values. It aims to explore the dimensions and forms of values and spirituality in this international movement exemplifying social innovation based on education and international dialog.

Some of the research questions that motivate this study are the following: How does the larger cultural context effect Gulen organizations? How can we capture the complexity and multiplicity of values and spirituality at work? Can we come up with a framework capturing global and universal values in organizations that can build bridges between East and West? The objective of this paper is to explore the dimensions and characteristics of values and spirituality in organizations in Gulen network.

Gulen network emerged as a social movement based on volunteer involvement in Turkey. The origins of the network can be traced back to 1968, but it was after 1990s when the network reached its tipping point and expanded globally. This non-governmental network of educational and civil organizations and associations attracts volunteers from all age groups and different races throughout the world. Gulen organizations continue their services as multicultural, multilingual, and secular educational institutions and civil initiatives.

No one knows the size of Gulen's community of sympathizers and followers but most experts agree on five million. It draws much of its support from young urban men, with special appeal to teachers, academics, and professionals. It has grown by sponsoring student dormitories, summer camps, colleges, universities, language schools, cultural facilities, interfaith dialog organizations and NGOs in more than one hundred countries. What makes Gulen unique is that he has successfully persuaded and mobilized many young people around the world to establish

educational and civil institutions and put into practice his discourse on global values/spirituality and realize his ideal of raising a “golden generation” and achieving global peace.

As a leading civil movement in Turkey with a universal educational and interfaith agenda, the Gulen movement aims to promote positive relations between the West and the Muslim world. This movement rejects the idea of the clash of civilizations, and aims to contribute to a peaceful world. The volunteers involved in this movement conduct activities geared toward promoting dialogue that bring all social sections closer together, with a particular emphasis on education. National and international meetings are organized to discuss the issues and problems that present obstacles to an atmosphere of peaceful cohabitation and coexistence in the world. The basic purpose is to ensure respect for universal human values. Volunteers are urged to not have ulterior motives to seek material interests, not to impose any ideology and not to seize power through politics in any country. Since the inception of this movement, for 40 years, a constructive position has been articulated and a positive vision has been implemented on the issues of democracy, multiculturalism, globalization, peace, and interfaith dialog.

Gulen has become a role model for millions of people living in different countries. His teachings have inspired thousands of people work for global education, peace, and the spread of tolerance. Followers of Gulen have engaged in hundreds of civil society projects and opened more than 500 schools around the globe. These people do not have or share a religious mission and they are professionals or volunteers working in educational and non-profit organizations. However, they experience spirituality deeply, intensively and centrally in their lives and work. They share common humanistic values, ideals and passion.

The most important sector of civil society projects Gulen network undertakes is in education. Gulen schools, which are especially active in the Turkic world, Central Asia, Balkans,

and Africa, continue to attract a lot of media attention in local regions and countries with respect to their success and performance in international science Olympiads. According to the observations of columnists and academics (Kurtz, 2005), the teachers working in the schools mentioned within the framework of Gulen's understanding are seen exemplars wherever they are by their spirituality, sound characters, the level of morality in their behavior and the human values they carry, in addition to their professional proficiency. Mr. Gulen explains his encouragement of Turkish entrepreneurs' opening schools as follows (Gulen, 2001): *“As for my relationship with the schools that have been opened, there is a lion in everyone's heart; a purpose hidden in one's nature since birth. When I was 12 or 13 years old and studying in Turkey, I had a book in one hand and a world map in the other. I would ask: "My God, how can we become a world interconnected with hope, love and science whose social problems have been considerably solved?"*

The second most important area in which Gulen community undertakes activities is interfaith dialog. Mr. Gulen regularly visited and received leading international religious figures including Patriarchs, Rabbi and Pope John Paul II. Until Gulen started meeting with these leaders and representatives, it had been something very unusual for a Muslim to get into dialog with a Christian or Jew.

### **Literature Review**

Although the literature on spirituality at work is growing rapidly; there is very little empirical and qualitative work that focuses on the diversity and forms of values and spirituality in organizations. The call to understand the characteristics and dimensions of spirituality at work is timely for a number of reasons. There have been many reasons addressed in the literature explaining the increasing need for and therefore popularity of spirituality at work; such as

corporate layoffs and downsizing (Leigh, 1997), increasing vulnerability of employees (Lips-Wiersma and Mills, 2002), search for meaning at work (Brandt, 1996; Neal, 1997), interest in new age and Eastern philosophies (Brandt, 1996), the decline of traditional support networks and groups (Mirvis, 1997), and ethical scandals (Neal, 1997). A large number of employees today often feel a separation from other people, alienation from their work, and a lack meaning in their lives (Neal, 1997). They often experience their work, family life and their faith to be in separate compartments and this separation leaves them feeling unfulfilled and unhappy (Neal, 1997). Employees today have started to search for meaning in work that transcends mere economic exchanges between isolated, autonomous individuals. Many employees have been looking at their lives and are asking themselves questions that are essentially spiritual questions (Kouzes and Posner, 1993): "What do I want to do with the rest of my life? What is my purpose here at work or life? Who am I? What is the meaning of the work I do? What do I want to leave behind? These questions have implications for how a person works, how he or she feels about the organization, and how he or she balances work, family, community, and spiritual needs.

The dramatic upsurge in interest in spirituality among researchers and practitioners is well documented (Neal, 1997). Growing numbers of organizations feel the need to build spirituality in corporate strategies and cultures (Burack, 1999; Konz & Ryan, 1999). On a deeper and more personal level, there is also an increasing interest in spirituality at the workplace (Conger et al., 1994). People are searching for a way to connect their work lives with their spiritual lives, to connect together, to be unified in a vision and deeper meaning that goes far beyond making money (Miller, 1998). Jackson (1999) proposed that it is advisable for international managers and executives to draw upon spiritual principles and values from religions and their secular equivalents from around the world.

Understanding spirituality at work begins with acknowledging that people have both an inner and an outer life and that the nourishment of the inner life can lead to a more meaningful and productive outer life (Fox, 1994). The recognition of spirituality in the workplace encompasses seeing the employees as people who have both a mind and a spirit and believing that the development of the spirit is as important as the development of the mind.

Moreover, the development and expression of the spirit at work may indeed have beneficial consequences for the organization. More employers today are encouraging spirituality in the workplace as a way to boost loyalty and enhance morale. Consequences of spiritual relationships are discussed in the literature such as increased employee motivation (Krishnakumar and Neck 2002), increased trust (Wagner-Marsh and Conley, 1999), increased commitment to organizational goals (Delbecq, 1999; Kouzes and Posner 1995), and reduced absenteeism and turnover (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Spirituality at work has also been found to be linked to improved organizational performance in a number of empirical studies (Milliman, Czaplewski and Ferguson 2003; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003). Moreover, there is emerging empirical research that reports higher levels of productivity when employees' spiritual needs are aligned with organizational vision and values (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Fry, 2005).

Various definitions and descriptions of spirituality abound throughout the literature. In the last decade alone; more than 70 definitions of spirituality have been introduced, and yet, a widely accepted definition is yet to emerge. Spirituality is described as a holistic, multidimensional humanistic phenomenon that transcends the physical, social, and psychological being. (Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf, & Saunders, 1988). Neal (1997) suggests that the Latin origin of the word spirit is spirare, meaning "to breathe." At its most basic, spirit is the life force that inhabits us when we are alive and breathing. Scott (1994) defines spirit as "That which is

traditionally believed to be the vital principle or animating force within living beings; that which constitutes one's unseen intangible being; the real sense or significance of something". In these definitions, spirituality is mostly viewed as a subjective, idiosyncratic, multidimensional, and multifaceted concept; difficult to be captured in a universally agreed definition. The ambiguity and the complexity of the construct; coupled with the inconsistency among different definitions, makes spirituality a difficult research topic to investigate. There is a need for deeper qualitative inquiries into the meaning and dimensions of spirituality at work.

In my working definition of spirituality, I pull from strength based approaches and positive organizational scholarship. I define spirituality as the journey to find a sustainable, authentic, meaningful, holistic and profound understanding of the existential self and its relationship/interconnectedness with the sacred and the transcendent. This definition emphasizes a) authenticity, b) search for meaning, c) interconnectedness and d) transcendence as the expressions of the "best" of the human condition and "positive deviance" as advocated by POS scholars (Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn, 2003).

Values are affectively-laden thoughts about objects, ideas, behavior, etc. that guide behavior, but do not necessarily require it (Rokeach, 1973). Maslow (1970) wrote on the definitions of spirituality with a special focus on human values and peak-experiences. Maslow proposed the concept of transcendent self actualization that carries a spiritual significance. However, there have not been systematic qualitative empirical studies that analyze how spirituality and diverse values are interconnected. Moreover, although there has been a lot of research focusing on a set of specific values at work (such as integrity or trust), it seems that there is little systematic effort to come up with a comprehensive set of values at work showing how they are associated with each other and connected to spirituality. In each piece written,

some values are taken and emphasized while some others are being neglected. The current status of the values literature reminds the story of blind men who try to describe the parts of an elephant. There is a need for a unifying scheme and theory that will illustrate the holistic and multidimensional nature of values in organizations.

Spirituality and religion are often used together and interchangeably. Although the two constructs share common elements, there are significant differences. Shafranske and Maloney (1990) defined religion as an "adherence to the beliefs and practices of an organized church or religious institution". Religion may or may not play a role in individual spirituality and is quite distinctive from spirituality. Religion is described as a framework for beliefs, values, traditions, doctrine, conduct, and rituals (Elkins et al.,1988). Although both involve the sacred, spirituality is a more subjective experience, whereas religion is a set of beliefs or doctrines that are institutionalized. As such, spirituality is a universal experience with fewer limitations. In Mitroff and Denton's (1999) study on spirituality in the workplace, the distinction between religion and spirituality became clearer, as about 60 percent of the respondents had positive views of spirituality while negative views of religion. Religion is generally thought to encompass qualities of an organized institutional affiliation, whereas spirituality is described as being a broader, more subjective yet universal experience.

Mitroff and Denton's study (1999) derived the following elements of spirituality: being informal and unstructured; being broadly inclusive, embracing everyone; being universal and timeless; being the source and provider of meaning and purpose in life; the awe felt in the presence of the transcendent; the sacredness of everything; the deep feeling of the interconnectedness of everything; inner peace and calm; an inexhaustible source of faith and will power.

However, if we want to explore what the most important dimensions are, a good method is to look across the studies in the spirituality literature to explore the recurring dimensions and themes of spirituality. This analysis has brought up the following three most common and most emphasized dimensions and themes of spirituality:

### ***Theme 1: Spiritual Relationships***

Spirituality at work is also about the notion that spiritual beings not only express inner life needs by seeking meaningful work but that part of being alive is living in connection to other human beings. Some have argued that we need to reenvision the workplace, from a view that it resembles a machine with distinct separation among parts into a view that the interconnections among parts of the system (workers) are the most important aspects of the system (Wheatley,1992).

Connectedness to one's self begins and is nurtured in relationships and spirituality includes an inherent quality of a relationship or connectedness with self, others, nature, and Ultimate other (Hungelmann et al., 1989). Similarly, Burkhardt (1989) described spirituality as experiencing harmony in relationship with self, others, divinity (the universe or a higher power), and environment (all life and nature). Connectedness with God, a higher power, divinity, or the Ultimate has been described as a life-giving, supernatural relationship with transcendent qualities (Burkhardt, 1989). Reed (1992) identified spirituality as intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal connectedness. A major component of spirituality is then spiritual relationships with self, others, nature and a higher power.

### ***Theme 2: Deeper Meaning and Purpose***

Elkins et al. (1988) described meaning, purpose, and mission in life as components of spirituality. Finding meaning in life experiences, or perceiving that life is purposeful, is a

consistent theme in spirituality. Spirit means life, and both life and livelihood are about living in depth, living with meaning, purpose, joy, and a sense of contributing to the greater community.

The expression of spirituality at work requires accepting that employees want to be involved in work that gives meaning to their lives. Terkel (1974) stated that work should be "about a search, too, for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying".

Where does this deep meaning come from? Spirituality often encompasses the belief that there is a supreme power, a being, a force that governs the entire universe. There is a purpose for everything and everyone. The universe is not meaningless or devoid of purpose. There is a higher power that affects all things. Everything is a part and an expression of this oneness. Everything is interconnected with everything else. Everything affects and is affected by everything else.

### ***Theme 3: Self-Awareness and Inner Strength***

Inner strength is a spiritual theme identified by Burkhardt (1989) to describe one's internal resources that can be drawn upon for strength, peace, hope, guidance, and energy, and includes a sense of sacredness. Burkhardt studied Appalachian women's understanding of spirituality using grounded theory and naturalistic inquiry. The core category identified by Burkhardt was unity or wholeness permeating one's life. Wholeness was manifested through one's becoming and connecting. Spirituality was described as "the unifying force that shapes and gives meaning to the pattern of one's self-becoming".

Connectedness to self is a process of self-reflecting that allows one to intimately know self and others. It is the process of gaining intimate insight into the individual self, which

expresses not only knowledge of self, but understanding from within one's self. Personal knowing of self is a spiritual process that is powerful, deep, intimate, soul-searching, and mystical in quality. Burkhardt (1994) described knowing as awareness about self, connections, and life journeys. Knowing self or soul-searching, forgiving self, relationship with others and a higher power, and self love are key factors in the development of spirituality (Kendall and Buys, 1998).

Although these themes address the issue of multiple dimensions associated with spirituality at work; they do not go far in illuminating the deeper meanings and values associated with spirituality at work. There is a higher need for qualitative inquiries and critical approaches as alternative to the accepted methodological and philosophical assumptions in research on spirituality and values. This study builds on the assumption that thinking outside the box of materialism and scientism can provide scholars and practitioners more liberated, innovative, integrative, systems views of spirituality. To this end, this study tries to build the connection between spirituality and universal humane values. Using this research, organizations and practitioners can a) learn deeper about the meanings and values individuals attach to spirituality at work; b) discover the multiplicity of spirituality experiences and spiritual values at work; c) understand and accommodate the diverse spiritual needs and values of employees; d) design organizational structures, policies, and programs that support positive expressions of spirituality and humane values at work.

## **Methodology**

This study was based on a qualitative case studies of seven selected Gulen organizations (main unit of analysis: organization) including three schools, two businesses and two NGOs. The three high schools were Turkish secondary and high schools advocated by Gulen. All these schools were recognized publicly for their emphasis on spirituality and effectiveness on values/character education. One of these schools, which was in Istanbul, was among the most well-established and successful ones, with a large (more than 1,000 students) student population. One of the schools was in Middle Asia and the other was in Anatolia. One of the NGOs was a foundation involved in building interfaith and intercultural dialog and the other was an educational foundation supporting poor students and providing them bursaries. Both of these foundations were in Istanbul. The business organizations were two small and medium sized firms operating in Anatolia both of which had about 50 employees.

Case study methodology (Rabin & Becker, 1992) was used with a triangulation of various qualitative research methods. First, qualitative interviews were conducted with stakeholders in schools and foundations operating within Gulen Network. To gain the most complete understanding of values and spirituality in all their complexity in organizations, a wide range of perspectives were accessed within each organization. The use of multiple respondents also afforded data triangulation through the comparison of reports and interpretations of the various respondents. In the sampled schools, for example, the principal, the chief administrative assistant, one teacher, one employee, one student, one current graduate and one parent were interviewed. The respondents were selected by theoretical sampling. In total, 32 qualitative interviews were conducted with stakeholders in these seven organizations. Interviews were conducted face to face in Turkish with individual participants in each school. They lasted from 35 minutes to 2.5 hours, and were tape-recorded and transcribed. Interview protocols were

flexible, informal and broad, encouraging informants to talk freely and openly about what they perceived to be significant. The interviews were semi-structured and allowed the interviewees to go deep into their stories, lives, experiences, values, philosophies, emotions and frustrations in detail.

Second, participatory observation and multi-sited ethnography were used. The researcher was involved in naturalistic inquiry to study real-world situations in each organization as they naturally unfold; nonmanipulative and no controlling. This made space for genuine and sensitive research to breathe and for questions and findings to emerge from the field. By immersion in the research setting, the researcher tried to come to an understanding of the values of the research participants from their perspective and of the context which shapes and flourishes these values. More than 20 hours were spent in each of these organizations in the role of a participant observer in order to gain the necessary depth of understanding of values and spirituality.

Third, to supplement all these field notes and information, a variety of documents, primary and secondary sources were also collected in each organization, to be used for documental analysis. I tried to gather as many sources as available for each organization, including vision and mission statements, yearly reports, meeting agendas, bulletins, and billboards.

### **Data analysis**

The researcher reviewed all the materials mentioned above, using the method of constant comparison advocated by Glaser & Strauss (1967), and produced the following building blocks for a tentative theoretical framework: 1) A set of profiles that capture similarities and differences in respondents' descriptions of values of the organization, their experiences of spirituality and their individual values; 2) A catalogue of the kinds of major organizational

values, paradigms, metaphors, approaches to spirituality; 3) A set of memos that capture the richness, texture and interaction of a) spirituality experiences at work, b) individual values and principles, and c) behavioral manifestations of values at work.

A grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used in data analysis, with a focus on material specifically related to the values, spirituality, and the cultural context. The interview transcripts were read to extract data on how these individuals thought about their organizations, their mission and roles, their organizational values, and what their personal definitions or conceptions of values and spirituality were. Then these analytical memos were reviewed, to look for patterns in conceptions of values, spirituality, virtues, and meanings of an ideal organization and organizational member according to their own philosophies. All these data were used to generate an exploratory framework integrating how spirituality and individual values are interconnected. The author paid special attention to the diversity and multiplicity of the recurrent themes regarding spirituality and values in the answers of the respondents. After the transcribed interviews were read to get an overview of the responses; they were re-read and first level codes were assigned according to how participants described their values and spirituality at work. These first level codes were then clustered into different themes and value clusters. As a result, nine distinct spiritual paths emerged with specific sets of values. The data were again reviewed to ensure that the content fit the identified categories.

To foster context that adds theoretical and explanatory value in the study (Johns, 2001); analytical memos were prepared reviewing all documents, field notes, and interview data focusing on the unique aspects of the research sites (such as organizational routines, culture, values etc.) that may affect (i.e. constrain or enable) individual spirituality, values, or behaviors at work.

## Results

The data suggested that there were implicit theories in the minds of the participants regarding their values, spirituality, the dominant values in their organizational, the cultural context of their organizations, and various approaches and practices regarding spirituality and values at work. The following results are meant to be exploratory and they serve as initial taxonomies, recurring themes and patterns. The analytical memos surfaced themes and frameworks on spiritual leadership, cultural context of organizations as well as conceptions, forms and dimensions of different values in organizations.

### On Spiritual Leadership: Fethullah Gulen

Gulen was described by the participants as an extremely respectful, sensitive and modest person. He says "*estagfirullah* (I beg the pardon of God)" every other sentence. One of the participants reported that Mr. Gulen slept two hours a day, he ate very little and he read a lot. He had no worldly property or goods. He had never married. He had never participated in active politics throughout his life and always been careful to and aloof from political activities.

Fethullah Gulen is a unique example of spiritual leadership. First of all, he does not see himself as a leader. He rejects all labels and stereotypes imposed upon him. He sees himself as a simple man who tries to act in accordance with divine order. He is very strict to himself and sees himself as "zero". Secondly, he is acting as a living example of deep spirituality and piety. The participants interviewed described Gulen as a man of modesty, self-discipline, compassion,

devotion, tolerance and dignity. The following excerpt, taken from the interview conducted with one of Gulen's closest circle of friends, illustrates Gulen's deep influence on his followers:

*“We all really have difficulty in catching up with his vision, his insights, his thinking, his depth and his open-mindedness. I cannot say I understand him completely. I think there are very few people in the world who can completely grasp his way of thinking and feeling, if any, including his close friends and followers. Although he meets hundreds of people every day, I think Gulen is almost alone on this planet. It is as if he is living in another dimension. He seeks approval of God in his every action, every gesture, and every word. He acts as if there is a bird on his head, always so delicate. Every night, he spends several hours by constant praying and deep crying until dawn. He is intense love of God. He is in constant metaphysical tension and this causes interruptions in his speech as outbursts of crying. He feels responsibility for the whole world. A baby dying because of hunger in Africa or a Christian killed in Middle East is sufficient to make him upset. He could not recover for days after September 11. He stresses killing one person is equal to killing all humanity in Islam. I have seen him trying to rescue an ant for half an hour. He feels deep love, compassion and mercy to all creation. He constantly prays for global peace and love. He wishes to meet with his Lover, his Creator soon - by death. But we believe he still has things to do on this world. Honestly, I even pray that God may take from my life and add to his.”*

Although teachers, employees and volunteers Gulen organizations are mostly Turkish Muslims, this composition seems to be changing quickly, especially since the movement is becoming internationalized and diverse. Religion and politics are not on the agenda of Gulen schools and NGOs, as teachers and employees asserted they “avoid any propaganda that may separate or alienate different people but instead focus on common bridges and universal values

that can connect us all”. Social contribution, dialog, compassion and service to humanity with love are the common denominators for the participants. One of the most important rules in the community schools and organizations is never to impose a certain ideology or a particular religion on anybody. All the participants in this research were very clear in asserting that “universal ethical values are emphasized in these Turkish schools, instead of Islamic or nationalistic ones”.

Participants used the term ‘hizmet’ to refer to the Gulen community and its educational, social, civil undertakings. *Hizmet* is a broad term encompassing a wide range of activities. At the most general level, it implies any volunteer service or work done for the community. The most frequent form of hizmet is teaching and educating the young. Hizmet is a commonly used word in Turkish and literally it means ‘community work’. The word hizmet itself is an illustration of Turkish Muslim culture and is used to refer to the concept of service and contribution to people.

#### On Cultural Context: Anatolian Sufism based on Love, Dialog and Compassion

Qualitative data analysis from the interviews and ethnographies revealed that organizations in Gulen Network have spiritual philosophies and deep values stemming from the paths of Sufism. The teachers, administrators of these schools consistently mentioned the tradition of Anatolian dervishes (*Sufis*) and Muslim saints who stress knowledge, love, dialog and compassion. Rumi (Mawlana) deserves special attention here, because he was mentioned by more than half of all the participants. Participants talked about Rumi’s philosophy based on universal love and peace; which shaped and influenced Anatolian intellectual and spiritual milieu (i.e. the context of these schools) for more than seven centuries. Rumi is regarded by teachers

and students alike as a universal role model, as a great symbol of tolerance and dialog in Anatolian Sufi thought. One teacher and one student recited the following poem by Rumi, to sum up their philosophies and values:

*“Come, come whatever you are,  
Whether you are atheist, or worship fire,  
Whether you have broken your oath thousand times  
Our convent is not the convent of despair,  
Our door is the door of hope come!  
Come as your true self, like you are!”*

Sufism in general has a very humanistic approach to religion. Sufis, like other mystics, are trying to reach God or the ultimate Truth by following a certain path. In doing this, they disregard the dichotomy of the physical world and the divine, or better to say that they get rid of the veils separating them. This also means that as humans, they become God-like through this process which again involves human activity. God is internalized, making man not an outcast but an extension of God's reality and love. According to Sufism, the most important thing which is necessary for reaching the God is love.

#### Basic Principles of Anatolian Sufism

- We are the avant-garde of love; we don't have time for hostility.
- Love all the creation because of the Creator.
- Tongueless to those who curse, handless to those who hit.
- Self-renewal is the only condition of continues existence.
- The greatest book to be read is human being.
- Be an advocate of others, but a judge to yourself.

- If there is no one left on Earth to build dialog and love, go to other parts of the universe.
- Universe is within human, human is within the Universe.
- Our way has been established on science, knowledge and love of human.
- Do not preach; instead act as a living model.
- Let us unite together, let us be huge, alive.
- Do not hurt even if you were offended.
- Whatever becomes heavy for you, do not make it applied to anybody.

The following excerpt of Rumi was seen in organizational publications, billboards, and value statements of two of the schools. This was the call of Rumi to all human beings without discrimination:

*"Come, come over, more over, how long this brigandage? As you are me and I am you. How long this discrimination of you and I? We are light of God! Why is this separation among us? Why does light escape from light? We are all from the same yeast. But under this bowed sky we see double. Come on, deny your Ego. Get united with everybody. So long as you remain in yourself, you are a particle. But if you get united with everybody, you are a mine, an ocean. Believe that all spirits are One! And all bodies are One! Just like almonds in quantity hundred thousands; but there is the same oil in all of them. There are many languages in the world, in meaning all are the same. If you break the cups, water will be unified and will flow together..."*

Gulen himself also stresses that all the nations of the world should break the cups of their egos and be unified in love of God, in love of mankind, without discrimination of races, classes, faiths and nations, living all together with happiness and peace. In his words:

*"Be so tolerant that your heart becomes wide like the ocean. Become inspired with faith and love for others. Offer a hand to those in trouble, and be concerned about everyone. Applaud*

*the good for their goodness, appreciate those who have believing hearts, and be kind to believers. Approach unbelievers so gently that their envy and hatred melt away. Like Jesus Christ, revive people with your breath. Judge your worth in the Creator's sight by how much space He occupies in your heart, and your worth in people's eyes by how you treat them. Do not neglect the Truth even for a moment. And yet, be 'a man or woman among other men or women'.*

*“Using Rumi's expression, an ideal person is like a compass with one foot well-established in the center of belief and passion and the other foot with people of many nations. So deep in his or her own inner world, so full of love... so much in touch with God; but at the same time so active, helpful and responsible in society.”*

#### On Values and Spirituality: An Emergent Holistic Framework

The patterns in qualitative data provided the following integrative framework capturing multiple forms and dimensions of values in organizations in Gulen network (Table 2). This framework forms the basis for a multidimensional, holistic, integrative theory of values in organizations. The emergent framework is meant to be a bridging theory between the East and the West, capturing the diversity of universal ethical and spiritual values in organizations.

**The Path of Truth:** This path relied on the values of objectivity, order, rationality, quality, perfection, truth, conscience, honesty, integrity, idealism, judgment, ethics, truthfulness, self discipline, consistency, efficiency, discipline, and self control. Behavioral manifestations include enforcing moral values in decision making, pointing out and correcting mistakes and wrong deeds, telling the truth, seeking out the highest ethical standards, acting as a guardian/auditor by overseeing the application of principles, enforcing self-discipline, walking

the talk, and preventing any forms of corruption. The following quote illustrates an employee who followed this path:

*“You know what? My colleagues call me a perfectionist or a high minded idealist. I have a very strong sense of what is utterly right or wrong. There is an ideal - almost utopian - picture in my mind. I continuously find myself struggling towards perfection. This requires constant questioning, self discipline and self control. I find myself as the strictest judge of myself. Even if my colleagues say that I have done a perfect job, I am still not comfortable because I feel that it could be better. Sometimes I have difficulty in sleeping because I think about what happened at work. I am asking myself: Why didn't you speak up for what you believed was the true decision? Why didn't you just intervene?”*

**The Path of Service:** This path relied on the values and principles of charity, empathy, compassion, altruism, kindness, appreciation, sincerity, friendship, helpfulness, humbleness, nurturing, humility, modesty, and affection. This form of spirituality stems from the innate drive to form social relationships and to develop mutual caring commitments with other humans. Behavioral manifestations in an organizational setting include organizing charity activities to help a fellow, transcending own immediate self-interests for the sake of others, donating for a common cause, helping a disabled employee or a troubled customer by meeting their needs, building rapport and compassion in the workplace, communicating with and by hearts, paying individualized attention to every person, serving other people, greeting colleagues sincerely, smiling compassionately, and offering them moral and emotional support. The following quote illustrates a participant employee in one of the business organizations who follows this path:

*“For me, people and love come before profits or loss. Business is essentially about people. If everyone on the team is satisfied, we will produce a more satisfying outcome for our*

*stakeholders. Most people do not like work because workplaces are emotionally and spiritually barren places. There is no close atmosphere, no common spirit, no high quality interactions, no peer recognition, no supervisor support etc. I always try to stress the values that tie us together: Love, compassion, generosity, helping, caring, empathy, belonging and cooperation. If we can flourish these values in our company, we can convey them to our customers as well.”*

**The Path of Devotion:** This path relied on the values and principles of conscientiousness, persistence, ambition, self-development, productivity, ethical success, efficiency, effort, achievement, zeal, and diligence. Work in daily life in Gulen organizations was seen as a sacred and spiritual task, as additional form of worshipping and prayer. This path was manifested in the following behaviors at work: striving for the well-being of the organization, acting as a model of conscientiousness by working hard, motivating other colleagues to work better, setting and achieving challenging objectives individually and at the group level, persisting in the face of hardships, loving own work, and conveying passion at work. The following quote comes from a teacher in one of the schools who follows this path:

*“I come to school earlier than everyone and generally leave late at night. My job means more than just work for me. It is my passion, it is my way of life, it is the big game in my life. Teaching is a deep way of expressing me. The school is the place where I thrive, where I learn and where I grow. My friends say the school is my natural habitat and I shine there.”*

**The Path of Inspiration:** This path relied on the values of self-awareness, creativity, sensitivity, emotional honesty, depth, authenticity, equanimity, self-expression, and reflection. This path is the universal path of art, beauty and aesthetics. Behavioral manifestations in organizations included bringing in authentic and unique perspectives, searching for organizational identity and soul, searching for a deep sense of meaning and purpose at work,

expressing own feelings, appreciation of the sorrowful aspect of life, decorating organizational settings aesthetically, and using powerful stories and metaphors to express spirituality. One of the participants who worked in the interfaith dialog foundation commented:

*“I view our work as creating a piece of art. The process of creating a masterpiece is not orderly. It is a chaotic and nonlinear process. It involves inspiration and passion. It involves turmoil and emergence. It involves tragedy and fascination.”*

The following quote is from a teacher in Gulen organizations:

*“I try to share my sincere feelings with my students. I love inspiring them. There is a true gift hidden in every student. Everyone is special and deep. Everyone has a duty to discover what is unique in him or her. My every student should find the best in his or her own. Every one of my students deserves respect and sincerity. I try to build very special relationships with my students.”*

**The Path of Wisdom:** This path captured the values and principles of science, comprehension, wisdom, insight, knowledge, understanding, intellectual mastery, enlightenment, learning, foresight, observation and curiosity. This path was manifested in the following behaviors and roles of participants: Being involved in research, trying to discover and make sense of the world, creating and sharing knowledge, trying to know deeply about phenomena, searching for wisdom at work, collecting information, and designing knowledge based strategies for the organization. As one participant stated:

*“I’ve always wanted to be in a role of doing research, discovering things, creating knowledge and understanding deeply. I love thinking and discovering in the name of God. Science is a sacred and spiritual activity in Islam and it is definitely the most valuable and dear activity for me. I have been involved in the R&D activities of this school for years and I love it.*

*Our school has had a track record of success in international science competitions. I feel so happy to contribute to such a noble goal.”*

**The Path of Trust:** This path captured the following values: Loyalty, trust, commitment, faithfulness, reliability, dedication, caution, responsibility, dependability, security and trustworthiness. There seemed to be great potential in research participants for value group identification, sense of loyalty and belongingness, willingness to take on responsibility, and commitment to larger efforts. Behavioral manifestations included carrying out duties and obligations as a member of the organization, ensuring a close atmosphere of trust, keeping secrets, keeping an eye on and warning about the potential threats to the organization, taking precautions and action in difficult times, as well as guarding and protecting the fundamental values of the organization. One illustration is as follows:

*“I am continually being offered high level administrative jobs from other private schools. However, I continue to reject all these offers; because I am committed to this mission and this school forever. I feel responsible to our teachers, our students and our parents who have all trusted on me. I cannot betray their trust. No money, no reward, no position is ever worth it. I am a servant only to this organization and will remain so.”*

**The Path of Hope:** This path relied on the values of enthusiasm, hope, gratefulness, positive thinking, resilience, openness, innovativeness, imagination, novelty and flexibility. Participants stated that they performed most energetically, creatively and enthusiastically when they believed they were contributing to a purpose that was larger than them. Some participants said no matter how bad things got; they had the hope and faith that all would work out well somehow. The belief that there was a guiding plan that governed all lives gave them a sense of resilience and hope. In this sense, spirituality was inextricably connected with hope, positive

thinking, and optimism. Behavioral manifestations included: Appreciating the good aspects of life and feeling grateful, using and encouraging intellectual stimulation for innovation, inspiring people to create novel ideas, starting new projects, brainstorming, articulating a vision for the betterment of the world around them, instilling hope and encouraging positive thinking. As one participant wisely put forward:

*“We are the children of our hopes and dreams. Hopes and dreams of a better life, better organization, better society and a better world. Our hopes are our driving forces. We live with our hopes. Every born child in the world is the biggest reason for us not to lose our hopes; because this is an indication that God still loves us and has hopes, mercy as well as plans for us. In our organization, we do not want to be realists. We are idealists. Reality is boring. Facts cannot inspire us. Ideas can.”*

**The Path of Will:** This path relied on the values and principles of magnanimity, self-reliance, decisiveness, initiative, courage, action, justice, protection, equity, willpower, independence, assertiveness, strength and confidence. Behavioral manifestations included managing people with justice and fairness, leading people to good and noble causes, ensuring equitable allocation of resources in the organization, protecting the rights of the minorities and the weak, preventing any form of injustice, taking risks for the common good, using power / control to ensure well-being of people, and preventing chaos.

*“While managing this school, I am aware of the heavy responsibilities of being a just and an able administrator. I am responsible for nurturing and protecting all these children – physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. I am responsible for taking initiative and action to take this organization ahead. I know what is going on here any minute and I am ready to intervene as needed. Being a good leader is about the courage to act forward.”*

**The Path of Harmony:** This path is composed of the values and principles of patience, acceptance, tranquility, dialog, receptivity, tolerance, universality, peace, balance, harmony, contemplation, naturalness, interdependence and wholeness. Participants felt spirituality was itself related to the deep feeling of the interconnectedness of everything. The search for harmony and wholeness in the universe (as well as in their organization) recurred as one of the central themes for more than 60% of the participants. Behavioral manifestations included: Accepting and tolerating diversity, showing tolerance for and being sensitive to individual differences, trying to turn differences into complementary synergy, focusing on the larger picture, mediating and resolving conflicts peacefully, fostering patience and tranquility at work, seeking out consensus in collective decision making processes, achieving inner peace and tranquility, giving everyone a voice in meetings and enhancing dialog with all stakeholders. The following quote is an illustration:

*“I try to listen to everyone with empathy and without any judgments. My colleagues generally come to me when they have something to share or when they have a problem. I try to calm people down and advise them to be patient. Everything will turn out well in the end. It will happen when it happens. No need to get nervous and stressed about results. We should do whatever we can do and then just trust the Divine Intervention.”*

## **Discussion**

This paper proposed a holistic framework for analyzing, capturing and nurturing diverse values and spirituality in organizations. First, this study contributes to the spirituality at work literature in identifying the different meanings and expressions of spirituality at work. The data suggested there was clearly a diverse set of ideas about what spirituality meant among these

respondents. These definitions and conceptions of spirituality certainly support suggestions made by some researchers (Mitroff and Denton, 1999, Duchon and Plowman, 2005) that the construct of spirituality is more complex and multi-dimensional than it is often assumed. The findings in this paper highlight the value of multiple interpretations and definitions when it comes to workplace spirituality. The qualitative data indicate that there are many different paths to achieve the positive incorporation of spirituality at work. The multiplicity and diversity of the values articulated by the respondents also show the range of different spiritual experiences at work. The emergent framework can be used, further developed and tested to analyze and cluster these diverse, complex and multifaceted forms spirituality in organizations.

Second, this study contributes to the values in organizations literature and illustrates how different set of values are associated with the diverse spiritual needs and inner landscapes of employees. The emergent values framework integrates a set of universal whole-system values which enable the human spirit to grow and flourish. Our study findings are in line with what Butts (1999) refers to “time-honored, life-affirming, and unifying values” (p. 329) which include truth and wisdom (which illuminate the mind and heart), trust and justice (which contribute to organizational and societal well-being), inspiration and creativity (leading to innovation), collective harmony and wholeness (synergy), compassion and charity (enhancing love among people) and deeper meaning (higher purpose). Although some of these values have been recognized in the literature on values and spirituality, this study has made a systematic effort to contribute to this literature by offering a comprehensive and holistic framework.

Third, this study also contributes to the growing literature of positive organizational scholarship (POS) as these positive and spiritual values contribute to the understanding of “best” of the human condition and “positive deviance” in organizations (Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn,

2003). As positive organizational scholars try to reveal positive dynamics, experiences, and organizational contexts that enable and flourish human excellence (Cameron et. al. 2003); the emergent framework in this study can help scholars and practitioners in this regard in identifying the deeper meanings and positive expressions of spirituality at work. This study provides an example that juxtaposing a POS perspective on spirituality research can offer new insights both to the literature on spirituality, but also to the POS body of knowledge. Further studies utilizing positive organizational scholarship can provide methodological advancements, scientific rigor, and theoretical depth to the areas of spirituality and values at work.

Fourth, this study contributes to the critical studies in management by pointing out to an alternative epistemological position instead of the dominant positivist paradigm. Research findings in this study reveal multiple interpretations and meanings attached to workplace spirituality. Further qualitative research in spirituality can benefit from holistic and interdisciplinary perspectives that capture views of multidimensional reality. There seems to be an evolving new paradigm in organizational research, which is driven by an emerging focus on interpretive methods, interconnectedness, interdependence, qualitative inquiry, sense making, and a metamorphosing relationship to materialism. Further research that combines rational and “trans-rational” logic and provides new ways to model the non-linear, complex behavior of dynamic systems can provide new and innovative perspectives on research on spirituality and values at work.

Finally, the results of this research can be used by organizations to design more enabling work environments for employees who have diverse needs and meanings of spirituality at work. Using this research, organizations and practitioners can a) learn deeper about the meanings and values individuals attach to spirituality at work; b) discover the multiplicity of spirituality

experiences and spiritual values at work; c) understand and accommodate the diverse spiritual needs and values of employees; d) design organizational structures, policies, and programs that support positive expressions of spirituality and humane values at work.

### **Reflections**

The development of positive values, virtues, and spirituality in organizations is necessary to build a better and more humane world of peace, love, cooperation and dialog in the 21st century. Humanity and world civilizations today experience problems not only in economic, political or material domains; but also in ethical, moral, social, or spiritual realms. As human beings, we have managed to conquer and reach far in the external world and universe around us; however, we have somehow failed to conquer and reach deeper into our internal universe: Our hearts, spirituality, conscience, values and virtues that make us truly human, that lead to real happiness, wellbeing and inner peace.

Our world is struggling with a myriad of complex social, economic, political, ethical problems. The world today needs peace more than at any time in history, and most of its problems arise from excessive worldliness, scientific materialism and the ruthless exploitation of nature. The call for values and spirituality is currently echoing in organizations throughout every land, as we are increasingly concerned about social problems, wars, religious intolerance, racism, violence, ignorance, poverty, conflict, pollution, crime, corruption, immorality, and global terror.

The need for universal common values such as peace, dialog, cooperation, compassion is recurring themes in not only in educational and non-profit organizations but also for corporations and businesses. As we move into the 21st century, the search for ways to improve quality,

meaning and sense of purpose in workplace is global. We need holistic, overarching and multidisciplinary paradigms to address and solve all these issues. Models integrating spirituality, organizations, and management can provide us some of these paradigms.

Spirituality can be a crucial element in organizations to form a world of peace, democracy, human rights, ethics, multiculturalism and dialog. A number of positive NGOs and peaceful institutions, together with a network of volunteers, social innovators and peaceful leaders can form “islands of peace” throughout the globe. This depends on deep and large-scale systems change, involving work with idealist people from all faiths, multi-national corporations, government agencies, and civil society organizations all over the world. Gulen Network provides a unique case in this regard. The case of Gulen schools and organizations suggest that a network of schools, NGOs and peaceful institutions led by volunteers, social innovators and peaceful leaders can form “islands of peace” throughout the globe.

Gulen network provides examples of organizations which try to nurture positive values such as love, compassion, dialog, respect for others’ rights, tolerance for diversity, and non-violent means in every aspect of work life. Organizations in Gulen network indicate how the truest fruits of spirituality can indeed be socially beneficial and positive in the workplace. Regardless of the differences of race, faith and color, Gulen schools and organizations aim to serve as a bridge between the peoples of the countries where they are and thereby can contribute to the world peace. Further research on these organizations advocated by Gulen can reveal potentially rich data, cases and models on integrating values and spirituality with management and organizations. Research on Gulen organizations also offers new insights and rich perspectives for employees, managers and organizations interested in developing values and spirituality in the workplace.

We need holistic, overarching, integrative and multidisciplinary paradigms, models and theories about values to address and solve complex problems of our age. This paper has been an initial attempt towards generating an interdisciplinary and holistic theory of values and spirituality. The emergent framework on values reflects the diverse, complex and multifaceted nature of values and spirituality in organizations. The framework also illustrates and celebrates unity, wholeness and balance of values in organizations.

Finally, this paper has also attempted to point out to the potential synergies that could be benefited from the synthesis and integration of various models and theories in the fields of Organizational Behavior, Psychology, Education, Spirituality, and Religion systematically. This is essentially a call for more holistic, interdisciplinary and multidimensional theory generation across these disciplines.

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**TABLE I:**  
**SUFI VALUE PARADIGMS IN GULEN ORGANIZATIONS**

	TRADITIONAL DOMINANT CONTEXT	ANATOLIAN SUFI CONTEXT
Focus on specific values of:	Freedom, individual rights, self-esteem, self-worth, material success, initiative	Service and contribution to society, belonging, respect, modesty, cooperation, devotion
Cultural dimensions	Individualism	Collectivism
	Low context	High context
	Low power distance	High power distance
Paradigm	Materialism	Spirituality
Dominant theme	Competition	Cooperation
Production of Knowledge	Analysis	Synthesis
Attitudes towards oneself	Self-confidence	Self-criticism
Relationships	Contractual, partial	Long-term, holistic
Self-representation	Impression Management	Authentic Behavior
View	Compartmentalization	Interconnectedness
Locus of behavior	Self-interest	Service to community
Atmosphere	Doubt and fear	Trust and support
Control	Power and influence on others	Control on oneself
Role of Ego	Self-esteem, strong ego	Transcending the ego
Self-actualization leads to	Pride and Arrogance	Humility and Humbleness
Leadership style closer to	Charismatic Leadership	Servant Leadership
Organizational life	Challenge and struggle	Altruism and mutual help
Nature of inspiration	Intellectual stimulation	Emotional arousal
Nature of motivation	Extrinsic	Intrinsic

**TABLE II:  
AN EMERGENT FRAMEWORK OF VALUES AND SPIRITUALITY IN ORGANIZATIONS**

Sufi Paths	Origin	Defining Set of Values
Path of Truth	<i>Hakikat</i>	Objectivity, truthfulness, ethics, order, rationality, quality, perfection, truth, conscience, self discipline, idealism, judgment, consistency, efficiency, discipline, control
Path of Compassion	<i>Sevgi</i>	Love, affection, service, charity, empathy, gentleness, compassion, mercy, altruism, forgiveness, kindness, appreciation, sincerity, friendship, helpfulness, humbleness, nurturing, humility, modesty, affection
Path of Devotion	<i>Sevk</i>	Conscientiousness, striving, adaptability, persistence, perseverance, ambition, self-development, productivity, ethical success, effort, work, achievement, diligence, competitiveness
Path of Inspiration	<i>Ask</i>	Self-awareness, creativity, inspiration, sensitivity, emotional honesty, aesthetics, depth, authenticity, equanimity, art, beauty, self-expression, elegance, culture, reflection
Path of Wisdom	<i>Ilim</i>	Science, comprehension, insight, knowledge, understanding, intellectual mastery, enlightenment, learning, foresight, observation, curiosity, cognition
Path of Trust	<i>Sadakat</i>	Loyalty, trust, commitment, faithfulness, reliability, obedience, dedication, caution, responsibility, dependability, trustworthiness, honesty, integrity
Path of Hope	<i>Sukur</i>	Exploration, openness, thanksgiving, hope, enthusiasm, gratefulness, positive thinking, resilience, innovativeness, imagination, novelty, flexibility, change
Path of Will	<i>Irade</i>	Magnanimity, courage, self-reliance, decisiveness, initiative, action, determination, justice, freedom, equity, willpower, assertiveness, strength, confidence, zeal, implementation
Path of Harmony	<i>Huzur</i>	Patience, acceptance, dialog, receptivity, tolerance, calmness, courtesy, universality, peace, balance, moderation, harmony, naturalness, wholeness, tranquility, interdependence, interconnectedness