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An integrated spiritual practice framework for use within social work

Abstract

Social work continues to move towards the incorporation of spirituality within social work theory and practice, yet gaps remain at many levels. The current dearth of theorization of spirituality in social work has created a situation where individual social workers wishing to include spirituality in their practice are forced to rely on their own initiative and inventiveness, with no clear theoretical, practical or ethical guidelines. This paper presents the beginnings of an integrated spiritual practice framework which may help to address some of these concerns. This research scrutinized the proposed Integrated Spiritual Practice Framework (ISPF) through literature survey of three spiritual ideologies (Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism) using the process of meta-triangulation. The study found that each ideological perspective provided evidence and support for the structures and concepts of the ISPF. Through the analysis and theory building process each ideology contributed greater understanding of components of the ISPF, resulting in a more sophisticated and developed framework for integrating spirituality within social work.

Key words: Spiritual practice framework; spirituality and social work;

Introduction

Over the last twenty to thirty years, spirituality has gained increased attention within the field of social work (Hodge, 2011; Sheridan, 2009). Authors, such as Brenner and Homonoff (2004), Canda and Furman (2010), Hodge (2001, 2005), Ife (1997), Lindsay (2002) and Ramanathan and Link (1999), have identified spirituality as a possible answer to some of the perceived failings of current social work theory and practice. The inclusion of spirituality within social work allows for an holistic approach that permits practitioners to work with all dimensions of the person and their lives within the helping relationship (Hodge, 2011). However, many of these ideas are still in the conceptual phase, with little or no articulation of overarching spiritual theories or practices. Further, there has been little discussion of how spiritual theories and practices should be developed, adopted, or integrated or how this can be achieved consistently within the discipline. Whilst the

framework presented in this paper may assist in the integration of spirituality in social work, the main focus is not addressing the perceived failings within social work but addressing the emerging gaps evident as this integration process takes place.

The dearth in the theorization of spirituality has created a situation in which individual social workers wishing to include spirituality within their practice are forced to rely on their own initiative and inventiveness, with no clear theoretical, practical, or ethical guidelines (Canda and Furman, 2010; Sheridan, 2009). Much of the literature exploring the inclusion of spirituality to date, particularly in social work, is reflective of this gap and has focused on practice approaches and assessment tools, with little attention being focused on exploring overarching theoretical positions or structures (Brenner & Homonoff, 2004; Culliford, 2011; Hodge, 2001, 2004, 2005; Koenig, 2008; Mann, 1998).

In not looking at the 'bigger picture', so to speak, gaps still remain and practitioners and researchers are experimenting with including spirituality in social work practice with no reliable or overarching framework to guide them. Further, those who are attempting to integrate spirituality in there practice have had little or no education or training in this area due to gaps within the education of social workers (Hodge, 2011; Streets, 2009). Such a situation raises ethical concerns in relation to best practice and client outcomes (Sheridan; 2009). As practitioners begin to draw on spiritual interventions in their practice, more theorizing and establishment of common languages and frameworks to guide practice, education and research become paramount to ensure quality best practice in this area and to reduce potential risk of harm to clients.

Such theorizing and establishment of common languages and frameworks is not only important in relation to guiding practice but is a necessity as the influence for evidence based practice becomes more pronounced within the discipline and field (Hodge, 2011; Payne, 2005). The shift to evidence based practice, which relies heavily on empirical approaches to research and knowledge, means that allowing spirituality to stay a 'nebulous' 'mystery' (Hodge & Derezotes, 2008; Tacey, 2000), such practice approaches will continue to be excluded from practice because they do not meet the requirements of this positivist approach. Arguments put forth by authors such as Poole and Higgo (20011) demonstrate the potential for exclusion based on this factors. They state 'The scientific method, on the other hand, relies on reproducible evidence and on theories that allow testing and accurate

prediction' (p. 26). However, if we, as a discipline can concretize spiritual concepts theories and practices it would create the opportunity to apply the same principles of evidence based practice on spiritual practices.

Although this may be required to ensure that spiritual practice can be legitimately utilized in social work practice, particularly in organizational settings, I would argue that there should be some level of resistance to applying empirical positivist approaches to spiritual knowledge, theories and practices. Such a position is supported by many that question and challenge the legitimation of only that which is 'proven' empirically, due to the paradigmatic positioning of this approach (Hodge, 2011; Payne, 2005).

I would suggest that what this framework, and the related spiritual paradigms (Carrington; 2010a), offers is an alternative to applying positivist approach to spiritual theory and practice. Spiritual practices are informed from a different paradigmatic positioning and, therefore, should be 'tested' using methods, measures and lines of inquiry that are in line with their paradigmatic positioning rather than imposing a positivist approach (Carrington; in press). This would provide a way of gathering and building evidence in regard to spiritual theory and practice though research that is appropriate for investigation of spiritual approaches.

A further concern may be the unintentional misappropriation of spiritual knowledge, theory and practice. As individual practitioners, educators and researchers begin to draw from spiritual theory and practice, the concern is twofold. First, are the practices being authentically adopted with full consideration of the ontological and epistemological understandings that inform the theory and practice being included? Or are such practices being integrated in an ad hoc manner, that pays little attention to the underlying values principles and paradigmatic positioning that inform them? In which case, the spiritual practices used are not only outside 'normal' social work guidelines but also those of the spiritual tradition from which they are being drawn. This, I would suggest, is a very dangerous situation indeed. For example, are the various types of meditation that are being used in practice currently authentically informed by the paradigmatic positions or are the practices being separated from the theory and inappropriately adapted to fit in with a paradigmatic and theoretical position foreign and/or opposing to its foundations? Each form of mediation is located within a specific paradigmatic position with specific ontological and

epistemological understandings informing how and why meditation is practiced and what the goals or outcomes of that practice are. Taking a form of mediation and using it outside paradigmatic guides changes its intended purpose and outcome. The second concern is, are the origins and the owners of this knowledge being appropriately recognized in this integration of spirituality? Or as a discipline are we reverting to colonial techniques by taking this knowledge, separating it from its ontological and epistemological underpinning's or origins, and, through the process of Westernization, then claiming it as our own?

This article presents a spiritual practice framework that may address some of the issues raised here, from the ethical concerns relating to practitioners using spiritual practices without appropriate education or training, to the more complex concerns relating to maintaining authentic application of spiritual practices and ensuring ownership of such knowledge and practices are maintained. The framework presented in this paper, although present here as a framework for individual practice, has the potential of providing an overarching framework from within which social work can integrate, explore and communicate spiritual understandings, theory and practice. The theoretical construction of the framework in conjunction with the understanding of the spiritual paradigms put forth in Carrington (2010a) provide possible beginnings to establishing a safeguard and guide which may help to ensure the maintenance of the authentic application of spiritual theory and knowledge, whilst ensuring ownership of the different spiritual knowledge and practices are acknowledged.

This article will provide an overview of the study before presenting an overview of the initial practice framework to be scrutinized through the research process. The initial analysis is then explored before presenting and discussing the new framework developed during the theory building stage. Additional findings exploring links between the ISPF and spiritual paradigm (Carrington, 2010a) are briefly discussed. Finally the paper explores the implications for practice and the need for further research.

Overview of the study

This qualitative research project utilized the methodological model of meta-triangulation (Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Burrell & Morgan, 1979) rigorously to scrutinize the Integrated Spiritual Practice Framework (ISPF). Meta-triangulation draws from traditional inductive and triangulation processes within research, with collection and analysis of data being

conducted from a multiple paradigmatic perspectives (Alvesson & Deetz, 2001; Babbie, 1999; Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Morgan 1983).

The model adopted for this study, as suggested and utilized by Lewis and Grimes (1999), included three phases in the research process; groundwork, data analysis and theory building. However, to operationalize the Lewis and Grimes (1999) model for this study required some adaptations to address ethical and quality concerns. Adaptations enabled me to immerse more fully within each ideology, thus aiding in the protection and maintenance of each ideology's integrity and authenticity. Within the groundwork phase this included defining the phenomenon of interest, focusing the ideological lenses, identifying research brackets, planning the ideological itinerary and collecting the ideological sample and data. Within the data analysis phase, this included conducting ideological coding, writing ideological accounts and then re-immersion and meta-analysis where coding, categorizing and analyzes of themes and patterns occurred across ideologies. Within the theory building phase this included exploration of metaconjectures, attaining a meta-ideological perspective and critical self-reflection.

Within this process, a literature survey of three spiritual ideologies was used to collect the research data. The ideologies selected for this study were Self Realization Fellowship (SRF) (informed predominantly by Hinduism, but drawing parallels with Christianity), Naqshband path of Sufism (Islam) and Vietnamese Zen (Buddhism). It was hoped that selecting ideologies from outside the Western Judeo-Christian approaches to spirituality which have foundationally informed of social work (Lindsay, 2002), would open the potential for finding new meanings and understandings.

The research was explorative, the first stage of a larger research project, and also explored proposed spiritual paradigm (Carrington, 2010a). Hence, only two texts from within each of the identified ideologies were surveyed. From within SRF, Yogananda (1975, 1986), within Naqshband, Vaughan-Lee (2000) and Tweedie (1986), and within Vietnamese Zen, Hanh (1992, 1998).

Data was collected and analyzed in each ideology within the following brackets: Elements of the triadic whole: 'ultimate truth', dualism, spiritual/physical and masculine/feminine. Elements of the operational quadrants: masculine/spiritual, feminine/

spiritual, masculine/physical and feminine/physical. Elements of the levels of vibrational energy or consciousness: (the chakra system) physical, emotional, mental, heart, communicational, celestial and ketheric. In line with the methodology, the process of immersion was then undertaken in order to collect raw data, as guided by the research brackets, taking notes of any themes or patterns that became apparent within the brackets or that may inform the brackets.

At this stage, it is important to highlight that the research took the stance of recognizing knowledge, ways of knowing, theory and practice other than the dominant, to be equally as valid. Informing this stance is the understanding that knowledge is socially constructed and that power and validity any paradigm of knowledge may or may not have, is constructed rather than inherent. As the research was exploring subversive knowledge constructs, it was imperative to value this knowledge in its authenticity rather than attempting to critique from the dominant perspective, to allow for new meaning and understanding to emerge. Further, this paper has been written integrating the use of the first person, in line with spiritual approaches to research and knowledge sharing (Anthony, 2009; Carrington, 2010b). Such an approach is further supported by those engaging with Indigenous/spiritual research methodologies (Hoffman, 2010; McIvor, 2010).

The Integrated Spiritual Practice Framework at the beginning

The spiritual practice framework presented in this paper was originally developed as a personal practice framework to guide my practice as I attempted to integrate the spiritual. As Canda and Furman (2010) and Sheridan (2009) suggest, I was forced to use my initiative and inventiveness in the development of my personal practice framework as there was little else available to guide the integration of spirituality within my social work practice. In addition to the initiative and inventiveness alluded to by Canda and Furman (2010) and Sheridan (2009), this personal practice framework was informed by my years of spiritual education, training, experience and practice in conjunction with my social work education and practice. I presented my personal practice framework as a poster presentation in a number of forums of peers and colleagues and it was the enthusiastic response that encouraged me to explore the framework more rigorously to see if it could be utilized by other social workers wishing to include spirituality in their practice.

The personal practice framework was further developed and depersonalized before becoming the focus of this research project. It was proposed that the ISPF could be used as a tool to assist in what social workers might refer to as 'making assessments', or 'guiding interventions' and 'analysis'. It was created in line with the values and principles of Integrated Spiritual Theory (Carrington, 2010a) which acknowledges and incorporates both physical and spiritual principles, theories and practices. At the point of engagement with the research process, the ISPF consisted of a number of distinct components to be scrutinized throughout the research process, these being: The Triadic Whole, Operational Quadrants and Levels of Vibrational Energy or Consciousness (LOVEC). Each component will now be briefly outlined

The Triadic Whole

The Triadic Whole represents the ontological view that there are multiple physical and spiritual realities that are the sum of the ultimate reality. Different perspectives may use different languages to describe this ultimate reality, such as God (Christian), Enlightenment (Hinduism), The Divine (New Age), Allah (Islam), collective consciousness (Jungian). However, within the Integrated Spiritual Theory perspective, they are the same. The outer circle (see Figure 1) represents ultimate reality, which, due to the existence of physical reality, creates a false duality within creation.

The dualities of physical/spiritual and masculine/feminine were for me the most obvious and predominant dualities. Hence, it is these dualities that have been included in the structure of the framework. These false dualities are either complementary reflective dualities, such as spiritual-physical (as the physical is a reflection of the spiritual, with the spiritual being the physical and the physical being the spiritual) or complementary polarized dualities, such as masculine-feminine that, although appearing polarized, are in fact one. It is the balanced integration of both aspects that is truth in ultimate reality.

Operational Quadrants

In line with the epistemological stance of Integrated Spiritual Theory, it is assumed that everything within existence has aspects of the whole to varying degrees and the ultimate reality is the integration and balance of them all. Since the dualisms of masculine/ feminine and physical/spiritual are believed to be a false reality, created through the experience of the physical reality, the spiritual quest is to go beyond the falsehood of dualism to wholeness.

To do this, the individual must achieve balance between these dual forces and integrate them as part of the same whole.
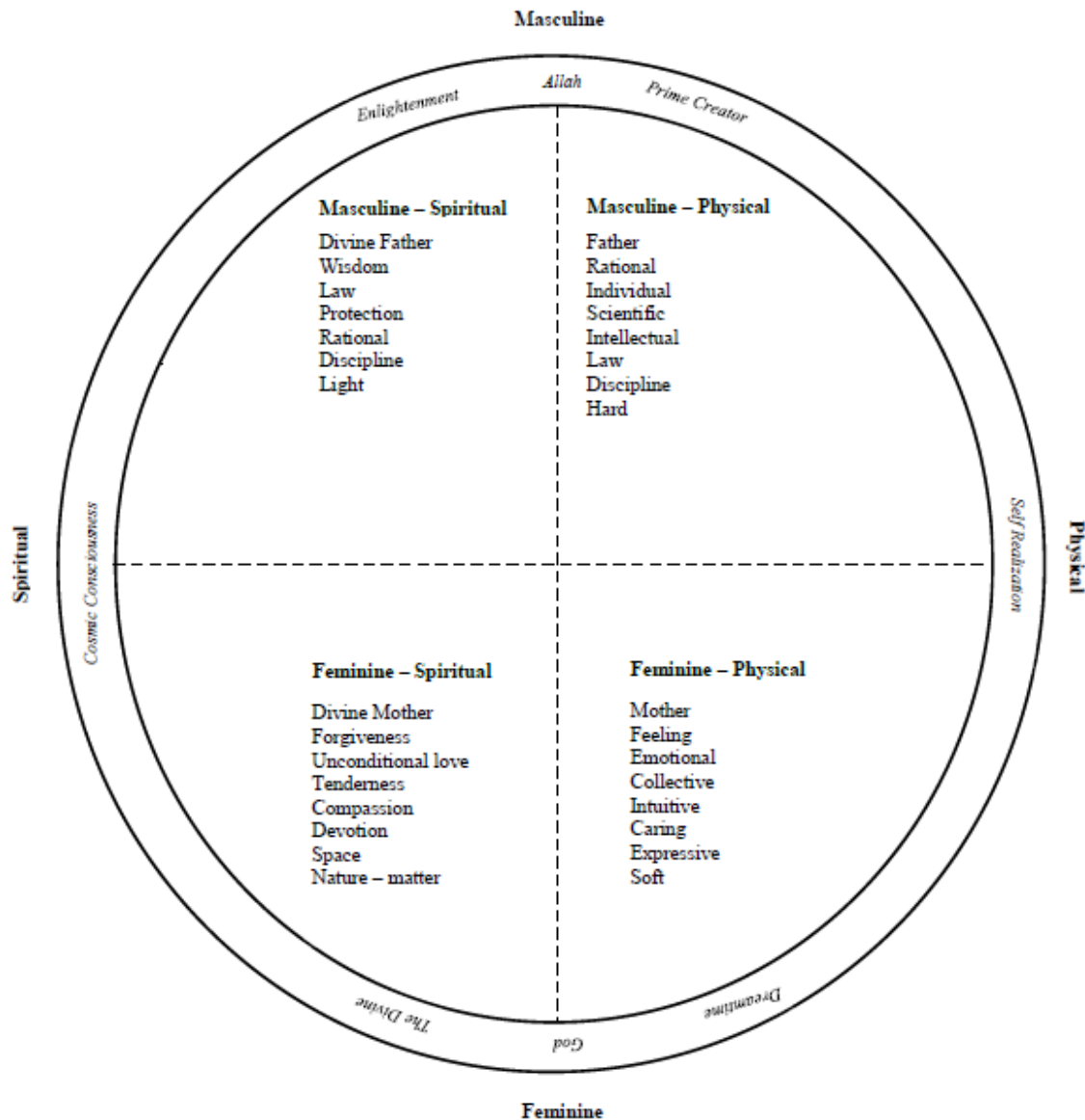

Figure 1 Triadic Whole and Operational Quadrants

Cross-sectioning the dual realities of masculine/feminine and physical/spiritual creates operational quadrants (see Figure 1). Each quadrant represents particular aspects and qualities that are unique to each section yet are also part of the integrated whole. Within the Masculine/Spiritual quadrant these are: Divine Father; Wisdom; Law; Protection; Rational; Discipline; and Light. Within the Feminine/Spiritual quadrant they are: Divine Mother; Forgiveness; Unconditional love; Tenderness; Compassion; Space; Devotion; and

Nature/matter. In the Masculine/Physical quadrant there are: Father; Rational; Individual; Scientific; Intellectual; Law; Discipline; and Hard. The Feminine/ Physical quadrant has: Mother; Feeling and emotional; Collective; Intuitive; Caring; Expressive; and Soft.

The quality of masculinity is not confined to man and femininity is not confined to woman. Each quality is found in both men and women to varying degrees, depending on the individual. Vaughan-Lee (2000) argues that in contemporary society, masculinity has become the measurement and the norm of physical 'reality', while the feminine has become suppressed and undervalued.

The operational quadrants (see Figure 1) aim to assist in intervention processes as tools for assessing where an individual's energies and consciousness are predominantly located and to identify what interventions may assist in balancing and integration. For a social worker, this process cannot only be used for the understanding of clients, but can be used to assist in reflective practice processes. Social work literature strongly supports not only knowing oneself and one's biases, but also understanding and being reflective on how one applies theory in practice (AASW, 2000; Allan, Pease & Briskman, 2003; Banks, 2001; Darlington, Osmond & Peile, 2002 and Payne, 2002, 2005).

Men and women tend to approach physical and spiritual life from the more valued masculine perspective (Vaughan-Lee, 2000). This imbalance between the masculine and the feminine in the physical is strongly supported by research in areas such as the poverty of women, violence against women, medicalisation of women, eco-feminism and political and structural oppression of women (Annandale, 1998; Bryson, 1992; Dominelli, 1991; Ife, 2002; Lewis, 1991; McMahon, Thomson, & Williams, 2000; Mullaly, 1997).

Levels of Vibrational Energy or Consciousness
The following concepts are drawn from spiritual authors such as, (Albertus, 1985; Brennan, 1988; Goleman, 1988; Gregg, 1995; Leadbeater, 1990; Liberman, 1991; Mann, 1998; Mascaro, 1962; Noontil, 1996; Paulson, 1998; Yogananda, 1946, 1975; Rosenberg, 1999; Todd, 1996; Vaughan – Lee, 2000; Yukteswar, 1990; Zukav, 1990), who explain that universal laws exist and govern many aspects of physical and spiritual reality. The LOVEC (see Figure 2) explored here are drawn from the spiritual concept of one of these universal laws. Yukteswar (1990) stated: "This universe is differentiated into fourteen spheres, seven

Swargas and seven *Patalas*" (p.32). The Swargas are the seven spheres starting from Satyaloka, the sphere of God, to Buloka, the sphere of gross material (physical reality). These are the macro spheres of the universes (spiritual reality). The Patalas are the physical reflection of the spiritual and are found within individuals and are more commonly known as chakras and the seven layers of the auric field. Each level or chakra has a unique energy or developmental quality to it (Brennan, 1988; Leadbeater, 1990; Noontil, 1996; Paulson, 1998; Yukteswar, 1990).
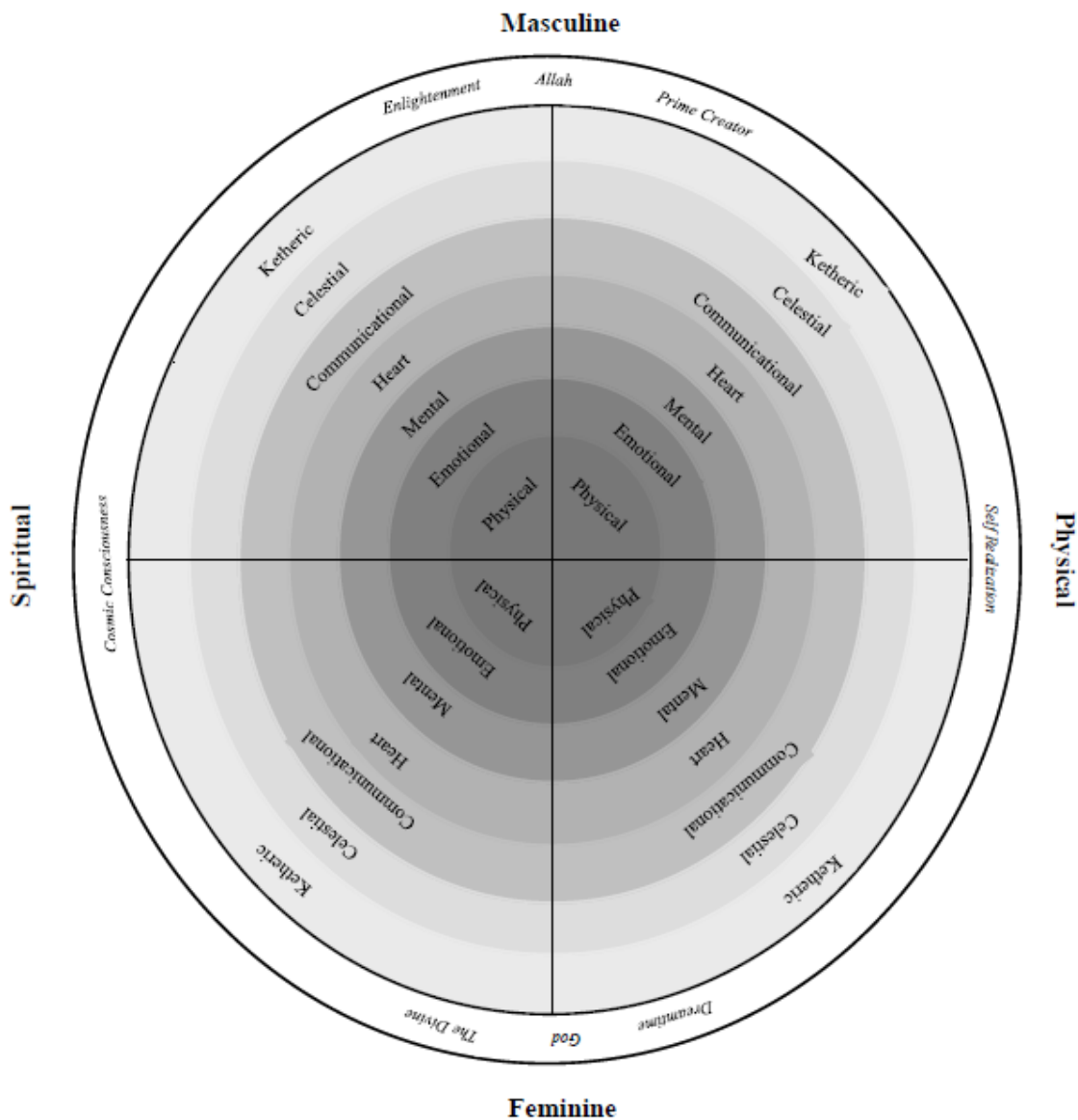

Figure 2 Levels of Vibrational Energy or Consciousness

The practice aim of the Integrated Spiritual Theory paradigm is to discover the 'ultimate' truth through the acknowledgement, exploration and integration of the physical and spiritual aspects of reality. To help operationalize this aspect of the framework, each operational quadrant is further refined through the introduction of vibrational energy or consciousness levels. This will help social workers to assess clients (whether they are individuals, groups, institutions or communities) in greater depth by assessing the Level of Vibrational Energy or Consciousness from which a client is working with a specific operational quadrant. This assessment will then be used as an intervention to guide the client through the process of growth, through the vibrational energy or consciousness levels and assist in the integration process of the masculine-feminine and physical-spiritual. In each quadrant the LOVEC run horizontally from the center.

The following is a brief description of the elements and qualities within each of the LOVEC (see Figure 2). Each level is represented by a colour from the white light spectrum and is significant to the density of light and frequency of the vibration (Brennan, 1988; Leadbeater, 1990; Liberman, 1991; Noontil, 1996; Paulson, 1998; Yukteswar, 1990). The different colours have been represented in Figure 2 with gradations of grey.

Physical (red):	Pertains to physical functioning, development and senses, physical security and safety.
Emotional (orange):	Encompasses emotional and feeling aspects, emotional development, desires, sexuality and appetites.
Mental (yellow):	Refers to the intellectual, psychological, power, control and sense of Self.
Heart (green):	Represents the ability to love Self and others conditionally. Note this level of love is restricted to personal love as most commonly experienced e.g., "I will love you if you fulfill my needs" or "I'm a loving person but I hate certain groups or types of people".
Communicational (blue):	Utilization of will in connection with the divine will, recognition of the power of the word, using discourse to communicate and create, and taking responsibility for one's actions.

| Celestial (indigo): | Spiritual senses, spiritual communication, creativity, intuition and love as unconditional and inclusive love that encompasses and values all life (soul love). |
| Ketheric (violet): | Connects to the higher mind, knowing, wisdom and integration of the spiritual and physical realities, one's Higher Self, connection and communication with Divine Consciousness. |

Analysis

Raw data was collected within each ideology in relation to the identified research brackets and recorded in a matrix. This data was then used to analysis ISPF from within the individual ideology and initial analysis was captured in ideological accounts which were written attempting to use the language of the ideology. At completion of this process raw data from each ideology was transferred to bivariate tables of the ideologies and research brackets to allow for the data to be analyzed across ideologies. In addition to capturing my initial analysis in ideological accounts as the methodology required through the process of cross ideological analysis, a further table was created capturing/summarizing my interpretations and understandings of the raw data.

Initial analysis of the components of ISPF, as explored within each ideology, was supportive of the initial structures of the ISPF. In order to demonstrate the methodological process, excerpts from the ideological accounts, and an abridged table demonstrating my interpretations through cross analysis, are presented below for the triadic whole. However, in order to reduce repetition for the additional components/layers, only the abridged versions of the cross analysis table will be included. The excerpts are taken directly from my field notes and have only undergone minor grammatical correction.

Triadic Whole

Initial analysis of the triadic whole, as explored within each ideology, was supportive of the understandings of the ISPF. To evidence these, excerpts from the ideological accounts, and a truncated version of the analysis table, have been included below.

> *Ideological account - Self Realization Fellowship:* SRF supports the existence of the triadic whole in its own language as *Aum*, *Tat*, and *Sat* and acknowledges that it

is the same concept spoken about by Christianity in terms of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. SRF explains that to create physical reality Spirit/God became three, hence, the three are the one. Aum or Holy Ghost is the spiritual vibration or energy of creation and the feminine aspect of God/Spirit, Tat or Son being Christ consciousness/ intelligence, God's pure reflection in creation and that which holds the universe in balance, Sat or the Father being the intelligence beyond creation and the masculine aspect of God in creation (Yogananda, 1975, p.300).

Through the triadic process of creation there is a delusion of separation and duality. Spirit, which is whole, put forth aspects of Itself as both masculine and feminine and Spiritual and Physical. Yogananda supported this aspect by talking both of the physical man and the spiritual man, and encouraged one to not be caught by the delusive physical senses but to attune to the spiritual senses that will see through the illusion of the physical Maya.

This perspective supports the concept that anything in the physical is a reflection of the spiritual by stating that everything in creation is but a thought of God. Nothing can exist in creation that has not come from God's consciousness and, for something to exist in the physical, it must come through the spiritual, or astral, to the physical.

Ideological account - Naqshband: Within the data from Naqshband, the triadic whole has not been spoken about overtly. However, there is much data that supports the individual aspect of the triadic whole as explored within this research, these being ultimate truth, and duality, physical and spiritual and masculine and feminine. This does not surprise me when one considers the spiritual paradigm within which this perspective appears to sit. From this perspective, the process of knowing is much more focused on the individual journey rather than setting out to discuss organized spiritual or physical laws and structures.

The Naqshband perspective speaks often of the oneness that is the Absolute or Ultimate Truth – being God. It also speaks of this Oneness, as God, Love or the Beloved. It is recognized that from the Oneness, physical reality was created and that through this process duality was created, with the veils of illusion and separation. Duality represents the masculine and feminine aspects of God and creation. The masculine aspect values renunciation and a journey to God as 'out there', outside of creation, while the feminine brings with it the secrets of the wholeness of creation and can therefore recognize and experience God in His creation.

Ideological account - Vietnamese Zen: This perspective supports the existence of the elements of the triadic whole as explored in the example of the rose, 'a rose is (1) A rose is (2) not a rose, therefore (3) it is a rose. The third rose is very different from the first' (Hanh, 1992, p. 56). First the physical perception, second the spiritual perception, third the ultimate perception of the true rose.

Vietnamese Zen values highly the interbeing or interconnectedness of all. This supports the ultimate truth as suggested in the ISPF, that of the ultimate truth being the inclusion of all and exclusion or separation of nothing.

This perspective also supports the idea of an experience of separation or dualism being created via physical creation but that this dualism or separation is an illusion bought about via attachment to wrong concepts and signs. Offering this explanation, there are '…Two Realms – the realm of the conditioned (samskrita) and the realm of the unconditioned (asamskrita). In the conditioned realm there is birth/death, before/after, inner/outer and small/large. In the world of the unconditioned, we are no longer subject to birth and death, coming or going, before or after. The conditioned realm belongs to the historical dimension. It is the wave. The unconditioned realm belongs to the ultimate dimension. It is the water. These two realms are not separate.' (Hanh, 1998, p. 80)

Table 1 Elements of the triadic whole and dualities

	SRF	**Sufism**	**Buddhism**
Elements of the triadic whole	1) Holy Ghost 2) Father 3) Son Mother aspect, Father aspect, Child aspect. Feminine, masculine, androgynous.	1) I'm longing for you 2) I love you 3) Heart/Love Feminine, masculine, androgynous The lover and the Beloved in love	1) Rose is 2) Not a rose 3) It is a rose Inter-being, all is made of the sum of the other.
'Ultimate truth'	One God One Ultimate Truth Many paths to the One Truth It is human beings or personality that makes them appear different. The Maya is an illusion that hides the ultimate truth.	Unity of being, everything is one and everything is a part of God. Everything is God; He is the cause of everything, the essence of everything, and the substance of everything. There is no other existence than He.	Nothing can be by itself alone, everything has to inter-be with everything else. Dependent co-arising, A is comprised of B, C, D, and everything else in the universe. "A" can never exist by itself alone.
Dualism	In creation there is an illusion of duality and separateness. This dualism is reflected in polarities such as, physical-spiritual, positive-negative, good-bad, God-Devil, right-wrong, masculine-feminine, male –female.	Everything that comes into life has a dual aspect, positive and negative, masculine and feminine, existence and non-existence, multiplicity and oneness Veils of duality and an outer world of opposites keep us caught in the illusion of separation from God.	There are two Realms – the realm of the conditioned and the realm of the unconditioned. The conditioned realm belongs to the historical dimension. The unconditioned realm belongs to the ultimate dimension. Ultimately there is only the one truth of interbeing.
Existence of Spiritual - Physical	The physical is a reflection of the spiritual and God. The Maya (physical world)	There is the illusion of duality of the spiritual and physical.	In the world of forms there is the illusion of form and formless.

	keeps us attached to physical and stops us knowing God. Need to renounce or detach from the physical to find God.	As everything is He one can Know God within manifestation.	Attachment to concepts keeps us trapped to realize the truth of interbeing one must correct erroneous views and concepts.
Existence of Masculine - Feminine	When Spirit created this universe He revealed two aspects of Himself: the masculine or fatherly and the feminine or motherly. God is both Father and Mother.	Everything that comes into this life has two sides, a masculine and feminine quality. We all have masculine and feminine qualities within us. Love has the masculine side of love "I love you," and the feminine side, "I am longing for you. I am waiting for you."	This aspect was not directly focused on. However, Opposite or dualistic concepts are acknowledged as being a component of the conditioned realm. Within the data itself, the use of gendered language (he/she) further supports the existence

Operational Quadrants

Initial analysis of the operational quadrants, as explored within each ideology, was supportive of the understandings present in the initial ISPF. To evidence the analysis of this component of the ISPF across ideologies see Table 2.

Table 2 Elements of the operational quadrants

	SRF	Sufism	Buddhism
Masculine - Spiritual	Heavenly Father, Divine Father, pure wisdom, law, protection, looks after the children of the earth, Father-God, vast, illimitable space, hidden infinite sphere wherein there is no creation, no stars or planets – only pure wisdom – is the Father, and pure reason.	The masculine side of love is "I love you", Beloved, discipline, focus, infinite emptiness, limitless, harsh light of consciousness, renunciation, linear, upward or downward, focus of intent, wisdom of separation, contraction, and detachment.	Within the data sample of this ideology this aspect was not directly focused on.
Feminine - Spiritual	Divine Mother, God as Mother Divine, tender, forgiving, the unconditional love of God, Cosmic Mother, universal love, her store of spiritual treasures,	Longing is the feminine side of love: "I am waiting for you, I am longing for you", listening, being empty, love, vulnerability, heart, divine remembrance, the soul is	Mother, love, understanding, free, caring.

	God's unconditional love, Nature, creation, full of beauty, gentleness, kindness, creative, instinct, feeling, the Beloved, love and devotion, solace and understanding.	feminine before God, surrender, devotional, sacred inner space, devotion, sacrifice, ecstasy, embraces the deepest secrets of creation, eternally united, sacred nature, wholeness of life everything is eternally present; wisdom hidden, link of love that unites the Creator and the creation, and Great Mother who is the oneness of all life.	
Masculine - Physical	'Fatherly love, man, wisdom, reason, protect, providing for needs, more impatient, less inclined to forgive, father's love is not always unconditional, instinct, regard for law, responsibility, properly, mind, thoughts, persuasiveness of truth, strictness, severe, punishment and sternness.	Masculine, renunciation, visible, men, focus, perseverance, instinctual power-drive, detach, focus, dominant, rationalism, materialism, tangible outer reality, material values, pursuit of knowledge and striving to dominate nature.' the masculine seeks to make itself known, hard. seeks truth out there,	Within the data sample of this ideology this aspect was not directly focused on.
Feminine - Physical	Motherly love, broad, feeling, motherly love is unconditional and greater than most human expressions of love, forgive, nurture, affection, love, softens our hearts, tenderness, woman, beauty, unconditional love to all, emotions, intuition, purity, sacred, sympathy, inspire, sweetness, kindness and tenderness.	Woman, service, collective, relating, listening, waiting, sacred nature, natural, receptive, attentive, a woman creates new life from her own body, understanding, creative, connected to the spiritual essence of life, sacred, home, warmth, security, love, she holds the power of creation, susceptible to the effects of guilt, feeling, fluid, irrational, inner experience, nurturing, maternal, shame is a particular affliction for women, repressed,	Collective, nurturing.

Levels of Vibrational Energy or Consciousness

Initial analysis of the LOVEC as explored within each ideology was supportive of the understandings present in the initial ISPF. However, there was limited data available for collection within the LOVEC. Hence, only minimal conclusion can be drawn on this aspect within this study. To evidence the analysis of this component of the ISPF across ideologies see Table 3.

Table 3 Levels of vibrational energy or consciousness

	SRF	Sufism	Buddhism
Levels of Vibrational Energy or Consciousness	Works from a system of seven Chakras these are life, energy and conscious centres within the body. The soul must ascend in succession to reach Cosmic Consciousness, this hastens one's spiritual evolution. The first five are associated with the physical and the last two the spiritual. The lower five are directly related to the five basic elements of the physical creation, earth, water, fire, air and ether. Each soul has a different composition, a different vibration.	Works from a system of seven Chakras. Through the awakening of these sources of energy and consciousness we access god. '"We awaken the King, the Heart Chakra, and leave it to the King to activate all the other Chakras."' (1986, p.36) Human beings are made of five elements, earth, air, fire, water and ether.	All physical phenomena are made up of earth, water, fire and air, plus the elements of space and consciousness There are nine level of meditative concentration. The first four concentrate on the form realm. The next five levels belong to the formless realm. There are various levels of consciousness both individually and collectively.

Theory building

Throughout the study the three ideologies explored supported the authenticity and the transferability of the ISPF and supported, to various degrees, the basic structures of the framework. However, my initial understanding and inclusion of what I call the triadic whole, was refined through the exploration of its presentation within the various ideologies. Hence, with the inclusion of my new understandings of the interplay between the triadic whole and the illusion of duality, the ISPF's structure required some adjustments.

The basic cross-section of spiritual/physical and masculine/feminine was, to a large degree, unchanged. However, as the qualities were expanded, I used a combination of some of the previously identified qualities and some of the new qualities, identified in the following Figure 3.
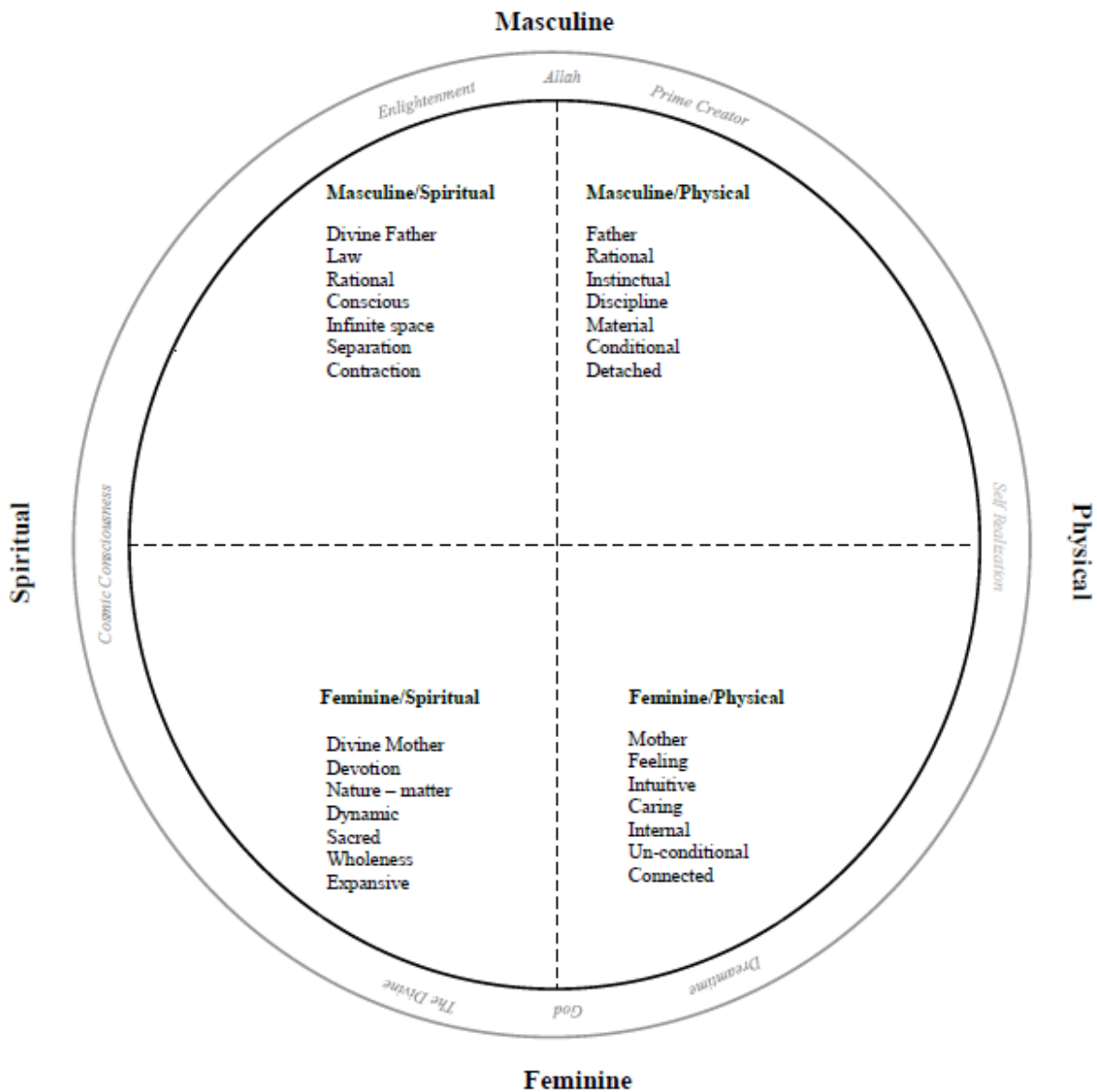

Figure 3 Cross-section of spiritual/physical and masculine/feminine

Each ideology explored supported the existence of the dualities of spiritual/physical and masculine/feminine. While supporting the qualities, I had originally suggested, both SRF and Naqshband were able further to contribute qualities to each quadrant.

The introduction of the triadic whole into the operational section of the framework, along with the masculine/feminine polarities, changed the quadrants into sectors. The new sectors on the spiritual side are: feminine/spiritual, masculine/spiritual and androgynous/spiritual as demonstrated in Figure 4. These new sectors on the physical side are feminine/physical, masculine/physical and androgynous/physical as illustrated in Figure 4. In line with cosmic law, once again, the physical reflected the spiritual.
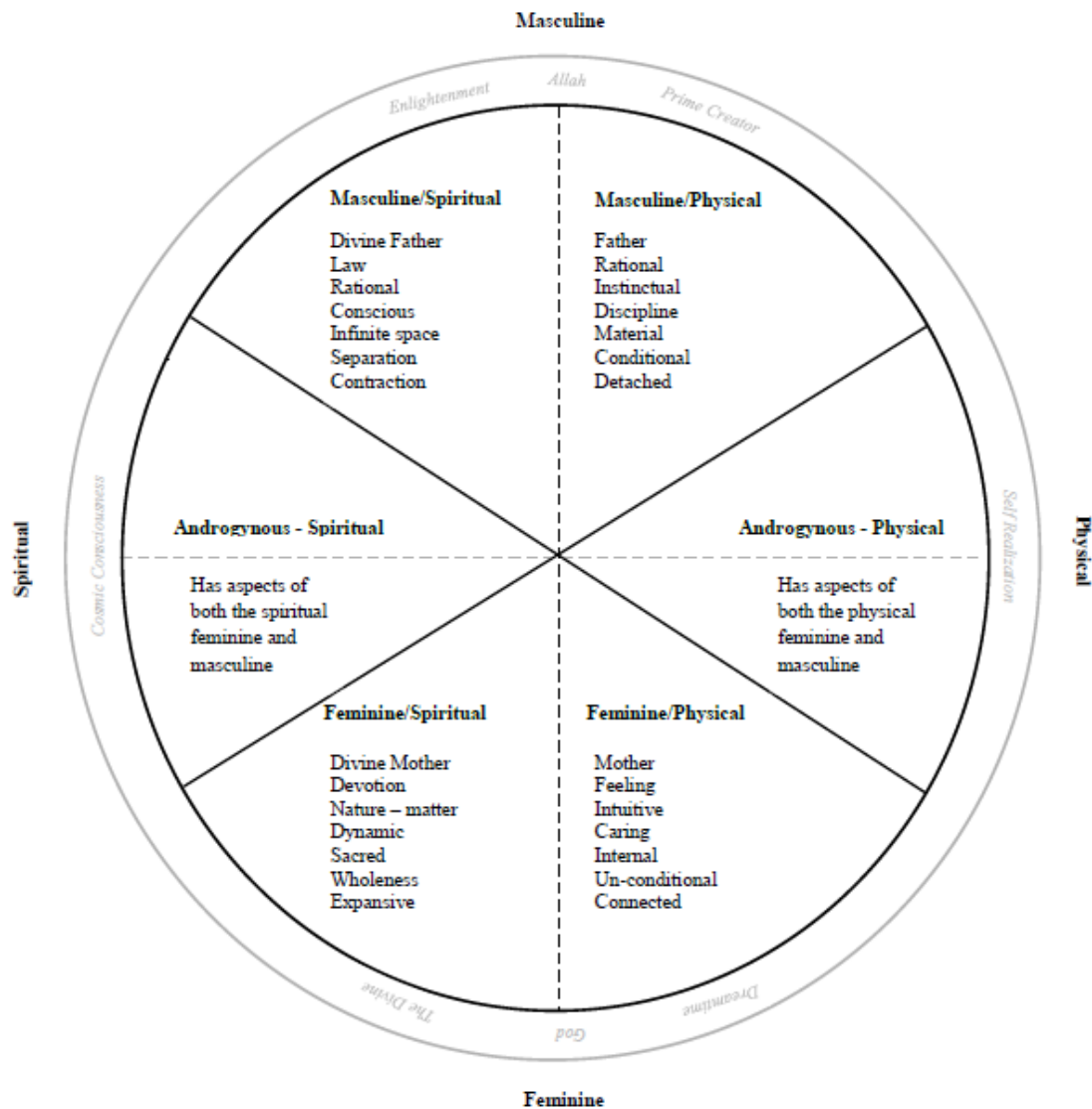

Figure 4 Operational Sectors – Spiritual and Physical

In exploring the interplay of the triadic whole within the illusionary duality of spiritual/ physical, the third aspect that was included was that of Christ Consciousness, Buddha Consciousness or Heart Consciousness depending upon the ideological language

used. This aspect was described by the Naqshband as '…the place where the two seas meet, where the infinite world of the soul touches the temporal world of everyday life' (Vaughan-Lee, 2000, p.178).

The three ideological perspectives explored in this study spoke of this aspect as the only way to travel to the 'Ultimate Truth', God, Love, the Creator or whatever other language might be used to explain the 'Truth'. Christ Consciousness is depicted Figure 5 in the ISPF, overlapping all other aspects and touching the edges of the operational section

Figure 5 Christ Consciousness and Ultimate Truth

leading to the outer circle, which is representative of the 'Ultimate Truth'. However, it must be remembered that this 'Ultimate Truth' is recognized as the same by all the ideologies explored, yet how they each recognize it can be labeled differently, depending on the perspective or path within which one is positioned.

The collection of ideological data pertaining to the LOVEC was limited. However, from that which was collected, minimal conclusions can be drawn that will need attention in future research. Each ideological perspective explored within this study referred to these levels of energy or consciousness in varying degrees. Although, none went into great detail in explaining them, they all recognized a process of moving through or attaining higher levels of energy and consciousness, this process, ultimately leading to God, nirvana, enlightenment, self-realization or 'Absolute Truth', depending on the perspective.

In addition, all ideologies explored referred to various elements of which human beings and creation were made. All agreed on the basic four, fire, air, earth and water, with Naqshband and SRF agreeing on the inclusion of ether, and Vietnamese Zen and SRF also including, space and consciousness. In recognizing this, one may then be guided by SRF and Naqshband explanations that each of these elements is directly related to the chakras, the chakra system being the base upon which the original levels were founded. At this stage, I have only altered the LOVEC to allow for the inclusion of the triadic whole, with the recognition that further research needs to be carried out to inform this section of the ISPF before it can be operationalized within social work.

Additional findings

As mentioned earlier, in addition to exploring the ISPF, this research explored four proposed spiritual paradigms (Carrington, 2010a). At the theory building stage it became apparent that a number of the concepts were shared, or reflected, between the ISPF and the paradigms. One concept that informed both strongly was that of the triadic whole. When the triadic whole was applied to understandings gained through the exploration of the spiritual paradigms, the spiritual paradigms where able to be positioned in relation to the qualities of the triadic whole. Figure 6 illustrates the positioning of the paradigms as guided by the triadic whole and duality. This then introduced a new way of understanding, organizing, and analyzing both the spiritual and physical paradigms.
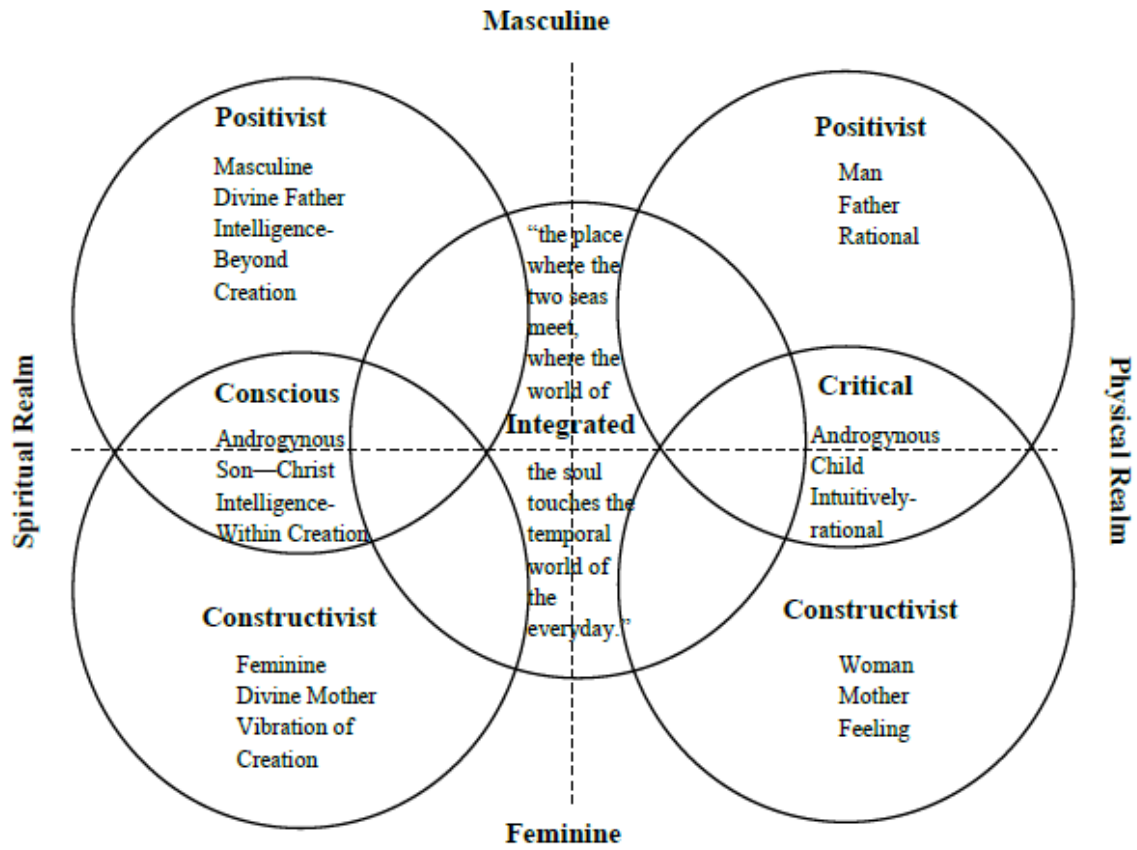
Figure 6 Paradigms as influence by the triadic whole and duality

With the introduction of the triadic whole into the operational section of the ISPF and the analysis of the spiritual paradigms, it was found that the framework was supported by the paradigms and, vice versa, as depicted below in Figures 7 and 8, perhaps providing a further level of authentication.

Masculine

Enlightenment *Allah* *Prime Creator*

Positivist

Masculine/Spiritual

Divine Father
Law
Rational
Conscious
Infinite space
Separation
Contraction

Masculine/Physical

Father
Rational
Instinctual
Discipline
Material
Conditional
Detached

Positivist

Spiritual

Cosmic Consciousness

Conscious

Androgynous/Spiritual

Has aspects of
both the spiritual
feminine and
masculine

Christ
Consciousness

Integrated

Intelligence
within creation
The sea where the
two seas meet.

Critical

Androgynous/Physical

Has aspects of
both the physical
feminine and
masculine

Self Realization

Physical

Feminine/Spiritual

Divine Mother
Devotion
Nature – matter
Dynamic
Sacred
Wholeness
Expansive

Feminine/Physical

Mother
Feeling
Intuitive
Caring
Internal
Un-
conditional
Connected

Constructivist

Constructivist

The Divine *God* *Dreamtime*

Feminine

Figure 7 Integrated Spiritual Practice Framework overlaid upon the spiritual
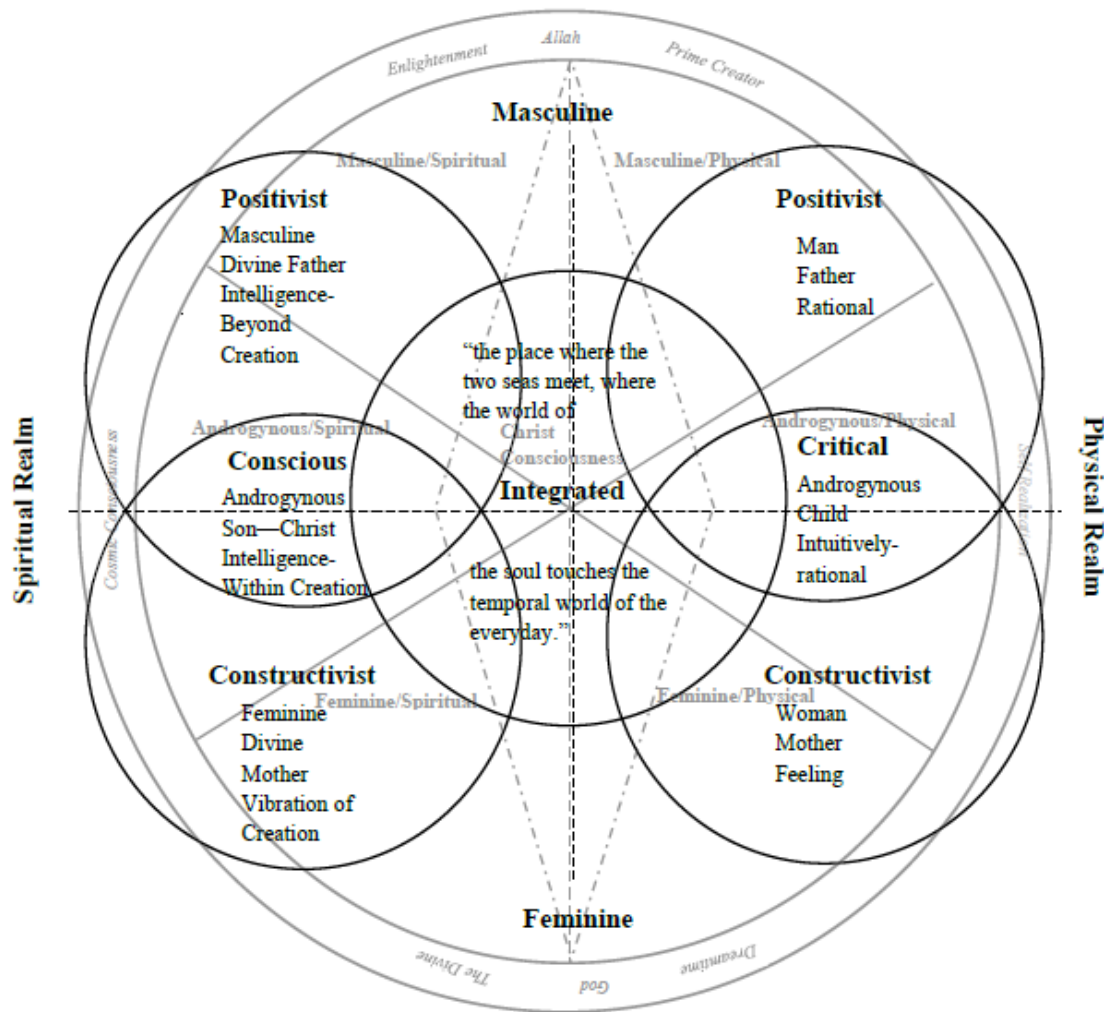paradigms

Figure 8 Spiritual paradigms overlaid upon the Integrated Spiritual Practice Framework

Implications for practice

The formalization of spiritual paradigms may address gaps at a paradigmatic level in regard to the formal inclusion of spirituality in social work. The ISPF is an attempt to fill the gap on a theoretical and practical level. The ISPF presented in this study is put forward as a guide to practice from either a spiritual or physical position. Although only at a beginning phase, the findings from within this study have validated the authenticity of the basic structures of the framework, and provided some evidence as to the operational potential of the framework as a tool for assessment and intervention within social work. As demonstrated in Figure 7 and Figure 8, through the overlapping of the paradigms and the framework, it was found that the paradigms, both physical and spiritual, were positioned in the operational sectors whose qualities were most congruent with that paradigm. It could

then be deduced that the same potential lies with categorizing and organizing the theories and practice within the operational sectors of the framework.

It is proposed that with further research, this framework will, through the identification of qualities pertaining to both the Operational Sectors and the LOVEC, not only be able to organize existing theories and practices within these, but assess where a client (whether they are individuals, groups, institutions or communities) is most predominantly positioned. This would enable practitioners to intervene with the most appropriate practice (physical or spiritual) as guided by the client's position within the framework in relation to the position of the proposed practice intervention within the framework. It is important further to affirm that this framework would not be developing new spiritual practices for use within social work, rather it is proposed as a tool to position those already in existence.

The potential of this framework can be illustrated by the exploration of a brief hypothetical client situation. A female aged 28 is presenting with depression and anxiety. In discussion it is found that she is a sole parent, working, studying. She is extremely focused on providing what is 'best' for her children and therefore feels great pressure to earn money to provide for her children whilst struggling with the tension that this creates with being present with and for her children. She also reports that she no longer has time for spiritual practice and her sole focus is 'just surviving' and paying the bills.

Assessment using the ISPF may suggest that the client's energy and focus and behaviours are predominantly in the physical/masculine sector and that this imbalance is contributing to the depression and anxiety. Therefore, the framework could be used to guide an intervention that takes this into account suggesting that applying an intervention from either the spiritual or physical feminine may assist the client by balancing the energies and focus within the feminine. This could include chanting or a Sufi mediation from the spiritual feminine or expressive therapies from the physical feminine. Drawing on practices from the spiritual/feminine could not only address the imbalance of the physical and spiritual but also the imbalance of the masculine and feminine, while drawing from the physical feminine could help to address the imbalance between the masculine and the feminine. This selection may be an option for a worker who is using the framework but is not trained in spiritual

feminine interventions. The worker may then wish to refer the client to spiritual practitioner from a feminine perspective to address the imbalance of the spiritual physical.

Although only in the theoretical stage, this example highlights how this framework provides a different perspective towards intervention guiding practice to the spiritual and/or physical feminine where perhaps a mainstream approach may be to intervene using CBT for depression and anxiety. However, this framework may suggest that a CBT approach is more in line with the physical masculine qualities and therefore may not be the most appropriate course for achieving sustainable change.

Future research

The following limitations of this study are addressed in the larger research project and include, further authentication of the structure of the framework and further in depth exploration from the three ideologies explored in this study. While exploration of spiritual perspectives not included in this study or the larger project would be an area for future research. Further exploration with a specific focus on addressing gaps in data collection within the brackets of the LOVEC is required. The experience within this exploratory study suggested that in the larger program the brackets be opened up, as there was much data outside the identified brackets that may have further informed or provided better levels to assign to the operational sectors. Therefore, in the larger research program exploration of both the suggested brackets and other references to levels of consciousness, evolution, energy or development outside of the original brackets became a focus.

To address the aims of the larger research program, for which this project was an exploratory stage, there was a need to extend the focus beyond the gauging and authentication of the structures, to collecting data to place within the framework to make it operational. Therefore, there was a need to collect data from both the spiritual and physical paradigmatic and ideological perspectives and the theories and practices that may stem from them. This research also indicated the need to conduct a comparative study of these physical and spiritual ideologies and their theories and practices. Through analysis of these, in juxtaposition with the authenticated qualities and structures of the ISPF, they would be placed within the framework as a guide to finding appropriate interventions.

Within the physical ideologies, theoretical frameworks used in the practice of social work, such as narrative therapy, feminist theory and social development, will be evaluated with a view to ascertain whether they may be incorporated within the ISPF and as to where within the sectors they might be positioned. This would be true also for theories and practices within the spiritual ideologies, such practices might include prayer, meditation and alternative therapies. This would enable workers to draw from theory and practices of both the spiritual and/or the physical realms (where applicable and where the worker has appropriate training) rather than workers remaining solely reliant on the practices from the physical realm.

It is noted that the larger project, of which this research was the core foundation, has been completed taking into account the above recommendations, and results from the larger project are currently in the process of being written up.

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