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## Leaders Need Spiritual Intelligence

Susan L. Fairchild

*St. Catherine University*, [suefairchild1006@outlook.com](mailto:suefairchild1006@outlook.com)

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**Leaders Need Spiritual Intelligence**

by

Sue Fairchild

Leadership Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

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Research Advisor: William McDonough, S.M.D.

Research Reader Committee:

Cynthia Bailey Manns, D. Min

Amy Ihlan, PhD

## Table of Contents

<b>List of Tables and Figures</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Background and Reflexivity Statement</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Reflexivity Statement .....	11
<b>Statement of the Problem &amp; Purpose Statement</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Purpose Statement.....	14
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Spiritual Intelligence as a Kind of Intelligence .....	16
<i>Spiritual Intelligence (SQ)</i> .....	16
Spiritual Intelligence: Developing Understandings and Measurements .....	18
Contemplative Spiritual Practices: Their Reality and Relationships with Distinction from Religious and Spiritual Practices .....	21
<i>Contemplative Spiritual Practice</i> .....	21
Contemplative Spiritual Practices as Key for Developing Spiritual Intelligence .....	22
Developing Transformational Leadership as a Capacity .....	23
<i>Transformational Leadership Capacity</i> .....	25
The Increasing Complexity of Issues Facing Leaders .....	25
<i>Complex Issues</i> .....	25
The Importance of Spiritual Intelligence for Transformational Leaders.....	27
Gaps in the Literature .....	28
<b>Theoretical Framework</b> .....	<b>29</b>
Emmons' (2000) Five Characteristics of Spiritual Intelligence Model .....	30
<i>The Capacity for Transcendence</i> .....	31
<i>The Ability to Enter into Heightened Spiritual States of Consciousness</i> .....	32

<i>The Ability to Sanctify Everyday Experiences</i> .....	32
<i>The Ability to Utilize Spiritual Resources to Solve Problems</i> .....	33
<i>The Capacity to Engage in Virtuous Behavior</i> .....	33
King's (2008) Four-Factor Spiritual Intelligence Model .....	34
<i>Critical Existential Thinking</i> .....	34
<i>Personal Meaning Production</i> .....	35
<i>Transcendental Awareness</i> .....	36
<i>Conscious State Expansion</i> .....	36
Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985) .....	36
<i>Idealized Influence</i> .....	37
<i>Inspirational Motivation</i> .....	38
<i>Intellectual Stimulation</i> .....	38
<i>Individualized Consideration</i> .....	38
<b>Method</b> .....	<b>40</b>
Participants .....	43
Data Gathering & Analysis.....	48
<i>Survey</i> .....	49
<i>Interview</i> .....	51
Data Analysis Method.....	53
Limitations.....	54
<b>Findings</b> .....	<b>55</b>
Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable the Capacity to See More Deeply and Broadly .....	55
<i>Enables Critical Existential Thinking (CET)</i> .....	56
<i>Capacity to Be Virtuous</i> .....	56
<i>Capacity to Transcend Our Environments</i> .....	57
<i>Ability to Reframe Perspective</i> .....	59

Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable Spiritual Intelligence for Leaders.....	61
<i>Transcendental Awareness (TA)</i> .....	62
<i>Conscious State Expansion (CES) &amp; Heightened States of Awareness</i> .....	63
<i>Enhanced Self-Awareness</i> .....	65
Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable Capacity to Help Others .....	68
<i>Sense of Responsibility to Walk with Others</i> .....	69
<i>Spiritual Intelligence to See Others</i> .....	69
Access to a Spiritual Community Enables Spiritual Intelligence .....	70
<i>Spiritual Director</i> .....	71
<i>Spiritual Community</i> .....	72
<i>Flexible Faith Community</i> .....	72
Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable Leaders to Address Complex Issues.....	73
<i>How Contemplative Spiritual Practices Can Help</i> .....	74
<i>Personal Meaning Production (PMP)</i> .....	75
<i>Hope</i> .....	75
<b>Discussion</b> .....	<b>77</b>
Intellectual Stimulation .....	78
Idealized Influence .....	79
Individualized Consideration .....	79
Inspirational Motivation .....	80
Limitations.....	81
<b>Summary and Recommendations</b> .....	<b>82</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>83</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>87</b>
<b>Appendix A</b> .....	<b>94</b>
<b>Appendix B</b> .....	<b>122</b>

**Appendix C..... 124**

**Appendix D..... 128**

**Appendix E..... 129**

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### List of Tables and Figures

<b>Figure 1:</b> Research Question Diagram.....	14
<b>Figure 2:</b> Key Terms.....	15
<b>Figure 3:</b> Spiritual Intelligence with Other Intelligences (Wigglesworth, 2006).....	17
<b>Figure 4:</b> Thematic Analysis Themes.....	26-27
<b>Figure 5:</b> Theoretical Framework Overview.....	30
<b>Figure 6:</b> Interdependencies of SQ and Transformational Leadership Theory.....	39
<b>Figure 7:</b> Theoretical Framework Interdependencies.....	40
<b>Table 1:</b> Professional Experience by Survey and Interview Participants.....	42
<b>Table 2:</b> Informal Leadership Experience by Survey and Interview Participants.....	43
<b>Table 3:</b> Formal Leadership Experience by Survey and Interview Participants.....	43
<b>Table 4:</b> Age Range by Survey and Interview Participants.....	44-45
<b>Table 5:</b> Completed Education by Survey and Interview Participants.....	45
<b>Table 6:</b> Geographic Location Provided by Survey and Interview Participants.....	45-46
<b>Table 7:</b> Gender Assigned at Birth by Survey and Interview Participants.....	46
<b>Table 8:</b> Gender Identification by Survey & Interview Participants.....	46-47
<b>Table 9:</b> Current Gender by Survey & Interview Participants.....	47
<b>Table 10:</b> Current Sexuality by Survey & Interview Participants.....	47-48
<b>Table 11:</b> Marital Status of Survey & Interview Participants.....	48
<b>Table 12:</b> Participant Duration Using Contemplative Spiritual Practices.....	49
<b>Table 13:</b> Participants' Frequency of Using Spiritual Practices.....	49-50



### **Abstract**

The complexity of our world calls for leaders to have spiritual intelligence and the transformational capacity to lead organizations and communities (Al Eid et al., 2021; Crichton, 2008; Hacker et al., 2017; Sisk, 2016). Spiritual intelligence can be affiliated with a religion but grounded in the belief that all humans align with a greater calling (Emmons, 2000; King & DeCicco, 2009; Lee-Fong et al., 2022; Shea, 2000; Vaughan, 2002). Through qualitative methods using surveys and interviews with thirty leaders, this study found that contemplative spiritual practices enable spiritual intelligence and build transformational leadership capacity. Transformational leadership is the favored approach to implement sustainable change and address complex issues (Bell et al., 2022; Morton, 2020; Wigglesworth, 2004). This study contributes to existing literature supplying research on contemplative spiritual practices' effect on spiritual intelligence and transformational leadership capacity. Conclusions include the necessity of contemplative spiritual practices and a trusted community for leaders to deepen and broaden perspectives, develop capacity, and support others while addressing complex issues. Recommendations include further research and enhancing the graduate curriculum at St. Catherine University and like institutions. This research is critical because neglecting our spiritual intelligence further complicates our world.

The Enabling Spiritual Intelligence study expands the transformational leadership theory and extends the understanding of the importance and accessibility of spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence is relevant now as more complex issues exist in our organizations and communities. Our world needs leaders with spiritual intelligence (SQ) and greater leadership capacity to lead organizations and communities through such issues (Al Eid et al., 2021; Burrows & Gnad, 2018; Crichton, 2008; Hacker et al., 2017; Sisk, 2016). This research explores how to achieve SQ and transformational leadership capacity and why it is crucial now. It determines the relevancy of SQ and how to achieve it, the presence of complex issues, and the importance of SQ for leaders. The introduction of this study provides the significance, scope, limitations, and an overview of the research structure.

The challenges with this research include a narrow sample of participants and the personal nature of spirituality. This study includes participants with undergraduate degrees who studied contemplative spiritual practices at St. Catherine University or similar institutions. This is a biased group to research as they sought to learn about their spirituality and practices, creating an opportunity for a control group. Due to time constraints, this study lacks a control group; however, it sets the foundation for further study. In addition, it lacks follower participant input, a balancing component of the transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985). Another limitation includes the personal nature of discussing spiritual intelligence and practices. This personal topic can make participating in surveys and interviews challenging. As a result of this sensitivity, I use pseudonyms, signed consent forms, and clear communication of the opportunity to stop participation at any time.

The background, reflexivity, problem, and purpose statements follow, along with the research objectives and question following. This study argues the value of this research along

with known limitations. The next portion of the research includes the Literature Review, organized by key terms and thematic analysis to represent the related identified literature. Next, the Theoretical Framework uses two spiritual intelligence models and the transformational leadership theory to organize the research. The Method portion of this research conveys a qualitative approach and analysis explaining the tools and data collected. It also reviews the reflective thematic approach to coding and identifying themes. The Findings section of this study includes the definition and support of five themes through participant input. The findings align with the transformational leadership theory dimensions in the Discussion section and include the limitations of this study. Finally, the Summary and Recommendations address the limitations, ending the research with the Conclusion.

SQ and leadership capacity fuel transformational leadership, the favored approach to enable sustainable change by addressing complex issues (Bell et al., 2022; Morton, 2020; Wigglesworth, 2004). Spiritual intelligence can sometimes seem out of reach or even mysterious, but we all have the potential or opportunity to develop it through contemplative spiritual practices. This study aims to extend the existing literature, education, and beliefs by understanding how contemplative spiritual practices affect spiritual intelligence and how vital SQ is today for transformational leadership capacity. Finally, this study extends research into how contemplative spiritual practices and SQ education can integrate into leadership programming. The opportunity to provide awareness of contemplative spiritual practices and education to develop spiritual intelligence could give St. Catherine University students greater transformational leadership capacity to address complex issues.

### **Background and Reflexivity Statement**

Spiritual intelligence (SQ) can associate with religion; however, it is “an interconnected configuration of affective orientations intimately linked to create meaning through connecting ideas, events, and persons rather than to a specific religious tradition or orientation” (Howard et al., 2009, p. 54). Through spiritual intelligence, we can create leadership capacity to be present with ourselves and others to work through complex issues collaboratively and thoughtfully. According to Howard et al. (2009), “spiritually grounded leaders exercising high levels of spiritual intelligence are animated thinkers who possess meaningful thought patterns, novel ideas, and rich imaginations because the soul is harmoniously integrated with the mind,” aligning with transformational leadership traits (Kessler, 2000, p. 4). This research illuminates how contemplative spiritual practices are an avenue to further spiritual intelligence.

Spiritual intelligence may seem out of reach, yet we have the potential to develop it. As John Shea (2000) states, “When the spiritual is seen as a dimension of the human person, it automatically becomes a human potential. It is not just a given, but a given that can be” (p. 116). Shea recognizes that SQ is accessible for each of us, and this study delves into how it becomes accessible. Through this research, I show how accessible SQ is to us and how important it is today due to the complexity of our issues. In addition, by using SQ, we can build transformational leadership capacity to address complex issues collaboratively.

### **Reflexivity Statement**

When approaching research, the lens I apply consists of melding my religious perspectives, education through the Master of Arts Organizational Leadership (MAOL) program, studying contemplative spiritual practices through St. Catherine University and my faith community, and professional experience. My religious perspective is that all humans are children

of God, the Sacred, the Divine, or the Creator, and as children, we all have a soul, spirit, or inner wisdom.

To complement this religious perspective, my first learning through MAOL was that we are all leaders. We are, therefore, all leaders with souls or a deep self. In addition, through my MAOL Spirituality and Leadership concentration, I learned we are to care for our souls as we care for our bodies; that takes practice, like how we need to exercise to maintain a healthy physical body. Personal experience caring for my soul strengthens my self-awareness and connection to others, the environment, and God (Vaughan, 2002).

I study contemplative spiritual practices through my education at St. Catherine University and my faith community participating in the Lilly Grant work. Practices include lamenting, centering prayer, praying with icons, nature walks, journaling, discernment, the examen, and other practices enabling spiritual intelligence. First, a class instructor describes the practice in the classroom. Next, the student practices the new instruction, and finally, the class discusses the practice during the next class.

Through my work experience, I lead teams to develop sustainable infrastructures, products, and services when sharing the leadership process, creating leadership capacity (Lambert, 1998). To further enable leadership capacity, the same team becomes accountable for implementing change and is usually well prepared to effectively implement it (Lambert, 1998). When I successfully shared the leadership process, I felt a solid connection to something bigger than myself and noted that team members had similar experiences. Many define this as a spiritual experience piquing my interest and understanding of spiritual intelligence (Ahmad Peerzadah et al., 2018; Emmons, 2000; King & DeCicco, 2009; Lee-Fong et al., 2022; Vaughan, 2002).

My position within this research is emic as I have an insider account shared with my participants as a student of contemplative spiritual practices with a four-year degree and sharing the belief in spirituality (Holmes, 2020). However, as a novice researcher, I recognize that my position will evolve and change over time. To understand this evolution of self-awareness, I used contemplative spiritual practices to identify these evolutions or growth opportunities and studied how they impacted my research. I learned how my research is a spiritual practice as I read or listened to participants' spiritual experiences and how they achieve spiritual intelligence.

### **Statement of the Problem & Purpose Statement**

At the turn of the century, according to Korosteleva and Petrova (2022), “a range of trends explicitly manifested themselves... (creating an) emergence of a new world order and global challenges of a planetary scale.” (p. 2) This amount of change is more significant now than at any other time in human history. These manifested trends become more complex as social media is the platform for discussion rather than face-to-face physical locations (Arora et al., 2022). Navigating and addressing complex issues requires transformational individuals and communities to work collaboratively while respecting and hearing each other's stories. To create the capacity to hold one another in such complexity, we need the ability to be present and create sacred ground in our communities (Wheatley, 2017).

This research will extend existing studies by understanding how contemplative spiritual practices enable SQ and build transformational leadership capacity. As we have learned, SQ is important now, but uncertainty exists about what it is, how to achieve it, and how to apply it. My research found a handful of reliable measurements of SQ and its association with various leadership theories, including transformational leadership. This theory is applicable as two components of the transformational leadership approach align well with the purpose of this

research. It is the favored approach to implement sustainable change and address complex issues (Bell et al., 2022; Morton, 2020; Wigglesworth, 2004).

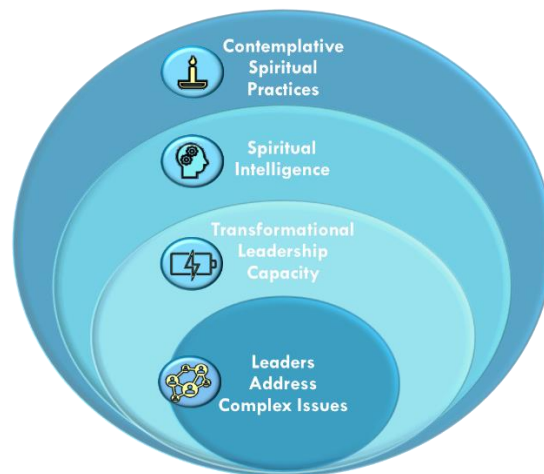
### **Purpose Statement**

This study explores how to achieve spiritual intelligence and transformational leadership capacity. In addition, this research seeks to determine whether and how contemplative spiritual practices enable spiritual intelligence. Finally, this research aims to understand the necessity of spiritual intelligence to build transformational leadership capacity and address complex issues.

Below (Figure 1) represents the research question of this study, along with key terms. These terms are independent of one another yet built upon each other, as noted in this research.

### **Figure 1**

#### *Research Question Diagram*



My research question is: How can contemplative spiritual practices enable spiritual intelligence to build transformational leadership capacity for leaders to address complex issues? The research objectives include determining whether spiritual intelligence is relevant for leaders, understanding how to enable spiritual intelligence, the necessity of leadership capacity, and affirming that ex issues exist. To summarize, this study contributes to the existing literature by

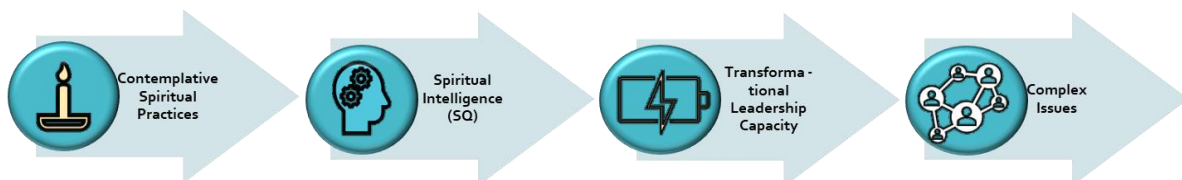
representing contemplative spiritual practices' effect on spiritual intelligence and transformational leadership capacity.

### Literature Review

This literature review synthesizes existing research to understand further how contemplative spiritual practice enables spiritual intelligence while building transformational leadership capacity so that organizations can address complex issues. The literature research applies a thematic analysis identifying seven themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The themes summarized here are *Spiritual Intelligence as a Kind of Intelligence*; *Spiritual Intelligence: Developing Understandings and Measurements*; *Contemplative Spiritual Practices: Their Reality and Relationships with Distinction from Religious and Spiritual Practices*; *Contemplative Spiritual Practices as Key for Developing Spiritual Intelligence*; *Developing Transformational Leadership as a Capacity*; *the Importance of Spiritual Intelligence for Transformational Leaders*; and *the Increasing Complexity of Issues Facing Leaders*. These themes identify relevant literature and address the question of this research. Also, it includes four key terms and their definitions: contemplative spiritual practices, spiritual intelligence, transformational leadership capacity, and complex issues. Supporting literature defines these terms to ensure aligned understanding throughout this paper.

### Figure 2

#### Key Terms





### **Spiritual Intelligence as a Kind of Intelligence**

The first documentation of the term spiritual intelligence may be in 1958 in a religious reference to the light of Christ (Crichton, 2008). Minimal research exists on this intelligence until the 1990s and early 2000s. Her research began to increase and associate spirituality with a specific form of intelligence (Crichton, 2008). An unsubstantiated association with religions may have contributed to the latency in the academic study of SQ for leaders. Baesler (2012) untangles this assumed association:

“Spirituality” is often associated with personal/subjective values and disciplines that institutionally validate values and rituals that give meaning and purpose in the search for the sacred (p. 144).

### ***Spiritual Intelligence (SQ)***

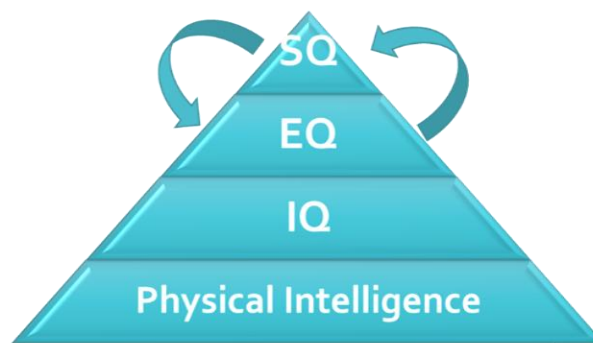
This study approaches spiritual intelligence without an association with religion. The term spiritual intelligence (SQ) is associated with other types of intelligence terms, such as intelligence quotient (IQ), emotional intelligence (EQ), and physical intelligence (PQ) (Gardner, 1993; Wigglesworth, 2006). According to Gardner (2011), “an intelligence is the ability to solve problems, or to create products, that are valued within one or more cultural settings” (p. xxix).

Several definitions exist for SQ. First, Steven Covey (2004) describes it as “our drive for meaning and connection with the infinite” (p. 53). Second, Brené Brown (2021) describes it as an inextricable connection we have to other things through a power greater than us. A third, less well-known definition comes from Francis Vaughan (2002), who defines spiritual intelligence as connecting: “the personal to the transpersonal and the self to spirit. Spiritual intelligence goes beyond conventional psychological development. In addition to self-awareness, it implies awareness of our relationship to the transcendent, each other, the earth, and all beings” (p.19).

Though Covey (2004) and Brown (2021) are well-known authors, I most appreciate the research and purpose of Vaughan's (2002) approach. His SQ definition and research initially began through a psychology lens yet landed in spirituality. This encouraged me to point my research to the importance of SQ for individuals, our communities, and organizations without a religious connection. Vaughan's definition is compelling because it offers a broader understanding of SQ and aligns well with this research.

### Figure 3

*Spiritual Intelligence with Other Intelligences (Wigglesworth, 2006)*



A global understanding of SQ is slowly developing to complement Vaughan's (2002) SQ definition. Though not all may align directly with his definition, articles have common threads, including a connection to something bigger than us, the our community, and the world. There is worldwide interest in SQ, as research articles come from Iran (Kalantarkousheh et al., 2014), India (Ahmad Peerzadah, 2018), China (Feng et al., 2019), and Greece (Polemikou et al., 2019) to note. Global literature awareness supports this research as generalizable and supports the relevancy of SQ.

As a final note regarding SQ, related literature is sometimes associated with a religion (Rahman & Shah, 2015) or an industry such as healthcare (Shea, 2000). According to Howard et

al. (2009), “The driving hypothesis of spiritual intelligence is that it is not dependent upon an organized religious orientation, but rather on the values and ethics of individuals as they contribute to organizational health and wellbeing” (p. 55). This research focuses on spiritual intelligence as essential for leaders, regardless of country, religion, or industry.

### **Spiritual Intelligence: Developing Understandings and Measurements**

This theme is a part of the literature review because spiritual intelligence remains a quiet intelligence with multiple understandings. Proving that it exists remains challenging as a debate continues about the relevancy of this intelligence (Skrzypinska, 2020; Ahmad et al., 2018).

Though he remained reluctant to name spiritual intelligence as intelligence, Gardner (2011) shared, “I continue to think that some form of ‘spiritual intelligence’ may well exist” (p. xxxvi). Building on this, Ahmad et al. (2018) gathered multiple spiritual intelligence research studies from Covey (2004), Wigglesworth (2006), Zohar and Marshall (2000), Emmons (2000), Amram (2007), and King (2008). Through their research, Ahmad et al. (2018) concluded that spiritual intelligence makes up the most significant part of our human intelligence capacity “as it is the most important attribute of human beings while IQ and EQ are viewed as an integral part of SQ” (p. 309). They go further to find:

Only SQ is capable of thinking beyond the known to link a brand-new thought or see a higher truth in a situation. Thus, we can say that spiritual intelligence refers to the skills, abilities, and behaviors required to develop and maintain a relationship with the ultimate source of all beings and succeed in the search for meaning in life. (p. 314)

Finally, a more recent study shows how the properties of this intelligence “do not conflict with the criteria as described by Gardner” (Skrzypinska, 2020, p. 506). However, completing further research can substantiate it as intelligence.

Several tools attempt to measure SQ in the hope of grasping or defining this intangible capacity. Initial tools came from two different indexes and separate creators: MacDonald (2000) created the Expressive Spirituality Index, and Wolman (2001) developed the Psycho-Matrix Spirituality Inventory (PSI). Both focus on Christian spiritual beliefs and seem “more a measure of spiritual orientation than spiritual intelligence” (Amram & Dryer, 2008, p. 6).

Nasel (2004) developed the first self-assessment for spiritual intelligence called the Spiritual Intelligence Scale (SIS). However, this tool measures only two traditional areas of spirituality (Christianity and New Age/individualistic spirituality) and excludes essential elements of SQ:

For example, the SIS does not include any items that assess the ability to use a variety of states of consciousness, such as meditation, prayer, or intuition in problem-solving, nor does it include a factor corresponding to the ability to see the world and solve problems more holistically. (Amram & Dryer, 2008, p. 7-8)

Wigglesworth (n.d.) developed a proprietary assessment called SQ21 that asks questions divided into 21 skills and four quadrants with a result range of zero to five (Deep Change). One must purchase this tool, which measures emotional and spiritual intelligence. Amran (2007) developed a spiritual intelligence assessment and “an ecumenical grounded theory” of spiritual intelligence (p. 2). In partnership with Dryer, Amran (2008) further refined the tool and claimed that it is the first official spiritual intelligence tool to validate this intelligence's existence universally. Challenging this approach, Amram “failed to distinguish carefully among spiritual ability, behavior, and experience, resulting in a model best described as a lived spirituality” (King & Derrico, 2009, p. 69).

Emmons (2000) influenced other spiritual intelligence researchers because he was the first to connect spiritual intelligence to Gardner's (1993) intelligence criteria. Emmons accomplishes this by:

Proposing five core abilities: 1) the capacity for transcendent awareness (of a divine being or oneself); 2) the ability to enter spiritual states of consciousness; 3) the ability to sanctify everyday experiences; 4) the ability to utilize spirituality to solve problems; and 5) the capacity to engage in virtuous behaviors (e.g., forgiveness). (p. 3)

As Emmons (2000) is a crucial influencer of spiritual intelligence according to other researchers (Amram & Dryer, 2008; King, 2008), I use his criteria by formatting them into questions for interviews further described in the Method section of this paper (Appendix B). After further investigation, Emmons (2000) removed the last criterion as it represented behavior rather than a form of thinking but remained in this research because of the inference to capacity.

King (2008) developed a model of four factors to measure spiritual intelligence: "critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendent awareness, and conscious state expansion.". He initially developed a long-form, then cut the questions in half, creating a short form of 24 questions after partnering with DeCicco (pp. 162 - 163). It is a self-assessment for SQ used by other researchers (Khosravi & Nikmanesh, 2014). This assessment is convenient, accessible, and short; therefore, widely used. In addition, King and DeCicco (2009) connected their research to SQ origins like Emmons (2000), creating greater legitimacy. Therefore, I used the SISRI-24 in this research through a survey (Appendix A) and further defined the four areas King and DeCicco (2009).

## **Contemplative Spiritual Practices: Their Reality and Relationships with Distinction from Religious and Spiritual Practices**

There are over a thousand relevant peer-reviewed studies of spirituality and prayer (Baesler, 2012), meditation (Fulton, 2022), and being in silence (Duff, 2003). Minnesota Public Radio announced Friday, November 11, 2022, new research validating that people with an anxiety disorder can use meditation instead of prescription medication, with the same effect on anxiety (Fulton). These approaches are spiritual practices but can lack a contemplative dimension. This paper limits its scope by focusing on spiritual practices with a contemplative element.

### ***Contemplative Spiritual Practice***

As with spirituality, spiritual practices have existed for thousands of years and can build awareness using the mind and body. A definition of spiritual practices states that they “are often used to develop awareness and connectedness to God (e.g., prayer), the higher power or inner self (e.g., meditation)” (Lekhak et al., 2022). There are multiple approaches to spiritual practice (Appendix C). These practices do not require an association with religion.

The most intriguing piece of spiritual practice to me is entering them with a willingness for change or transformation, creating a time to be contemplative. The term contemplative spiritual practice uses spiritual practice in a transformational way in this research. Benner (2012) provides a definition of this that relates well to my research:

The spiritual practices of any tradition with the most transformational potential are those with a contemplative dimension. This is because they are the ones that are most firmly grounded in stillness before self and the Divine. It is in this stillness that we best learn

true openness, and thus it is here that the Spirit has the most opportunity to work in our depths in ways that can prepare us for further becoming. (p. 163)

Connecting these terms is critical for my research. Benner (2012) further explains how “contemplation is a way of living” and enables us to “step back from doing to being” (p. 163). In addition, he states that contemplative spiritual practices enable deep transformational encounters with us, others, the divine, and any other living being we are in a relationship with.

### **Contemplative Spiritual Practices as Key for Developing Spiritual Intelligence**

Neeld (2011) recognizes three essential elements to enable contemplative spiritual practice. “First, some activity that announces, that demarcates this activity from what came before and represented coming to stillness.” (Neeld, 2011, p. 60). Second, spiritual practice has an element of silence or stillness. In spiritual practices, regardless of religion, silence seems essential to enabling a relationship with something bigger than us. Third, Neeld (2011) suggests “some kind of ending: intercessory prayer, thanksgiving, the gathering of thoughts for application to the day ahead, some way of acknowledging the completion of this time has been devoted to centering one’s being in the Eternal” (p. 60).

Contemplative spiritual practices can use the three steps when practicing lamenting, centering prayer, Lectio Divina, the examen, fasting, walking a labyrinth, and any form of art. Using these three steps, in addition to Benner’s (2012) definition, creates my research definition of contemplative spiritual practices. It also represents developing spiritual intelligence. Though not every spiritual practice may enable SQ, spiritual practicing may enable awareness, perspective, and greater consciousness connecting to Emmons’ (2000) research.

According to Covey (2004), leadership capacity and spiritual intelligence develop independently of others through habits of integrity. Connecting SQ to Gardner’s (1993)

intelligence components, Emmons (2000) claims we can develop the capacity to transcend the physical and material and be virtuous. My research demonstrates how contemplative spiritual practices enable transformational leadership capacity.

### **Developing Transformational Leadership as a Capacity**

This theme supports the research aims to understand how leadership capacity enables leaders to address complex issues. Leadership capacity is an integral part of my research. During the MAOL Colloquium, program director Dr. Sharon Radd (June 4, 2022) challenged colloquium attendees to “build your leadership capacity” when considering our country's and the world's current challenges. I accepted the encouragement and realized through research that how to do this remains unclear. Lambert (2009) guides us by suggesting that “leadership that is redefined as the reciprocal processes of learning together in the community grows the leadership capacity of the entire organization” (p. 13). Much like SQ, we build leadership capacity in the community by enabling our teams to participate in the leadership process and develop solutions together. This aligns with the MAOL program belief that we are all leaders.

Leadership capacity research initiates in the education industry but is relevant to all industries, organizations, teams, and communities, as leaders also serve in these areas (Lambert, 1998). According to Lambert, leadership capacity involves sharing the leadership process and is necessary for communities and organizations to navigate and address complex issues involving children's education. As defined by Lambert (2009), “When all those involved in the school community take responsibility for leading, the leadership capacity of an organization ensures the creation and sustainability of improvement” (p. 13). Lambert's reference to “all” includes parents of students, business owners in the community, teachers, administration, and school support staff, all the stakeholders in a child's education. Building leadership capacity is necessary for



communities to successfully navigate complex issues like supporting their children's education (Lambert, 1998).

In addition, capacity develops by us through healthy mental habits, according to Covey (2004). He notes that we build capacity by developing integrity "when you (we) make a promise and keep it" (p. 349). Covey goes further to state that when we listen to our conscience, it "enlarges your (our) capacities, your (our) intelligence, and your (our) contributions" (p. 350). According to Covey (2004), developing integrity habits enables spiritual intelligence and leadership capacity. Carol Wigglesworth states that "the capacity of the leader constrains the organization's capacity" (Deep Change, n.d.). These definitions represent the interdependencies of SQ and leadership capacity and are essential to this research. In addition, they are relevant because developing SQ and leadership capacity occurs individually and communally (Covey, 2004; Lambert, 2009).

Transformational leadership is a theory developed initially by Burns (1978), who first defined it by linking followership and leadership. Through his theory, Burns (1978) recognizes the interdependencies between the individual (leader) and their community (followers). Bass (1985) built on Burns' theory to create four dimensions describing transformational leadership noted in the Theoretical Framework of this paper. Bass's dimensions connect well with building leadership capacity to navigate change and complexity. This is the preferred leadership theory for my research, as transformational leadership is most applicable to the ability to address complex issues (Northfield, 2019).

Substantial literature exists regarding transformational leadership, so the research focus of this paper includes articles that connect spiritual intelligence and transformational leadership.

For example, research shows that enabling schools to change “requires both transformational leadership and spiritual intelligence” (Howard et al., 2009, p. 61).

### *Transformational Leadership Capacity*

My research focuses on individual leaders and their ability to develop capacity and SQ to serve communities and organizations to address complex issues. Developing leadership capacity has an individual and a communal aspect, as does transformational leadership. There is literature on leadership capacity (Covey, 2004; Lambert, 1998) and transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2019), but literature defining transformational leadership capacity is harder to find. Using these three words together as a definition is critical to my research because it represents the connection to building the capacity to lead through complexity, creating transformational change. Spiritual intelligence can be that capacity. Therefore, transformational leadership capacity is navigating complex issues and implementing change while maintaining spiritual intelligence.

### **The Increasing Complexity of Issues Facing Leaders**

Today, more than ever, complex issues challenge leaders as our world is “not prone to one-dimensional explanations, simplistic answers or quick fixes” (Burrows & Gnad, 2018, p. 7). This complexity demands leaders with SQ and the capacity to lead organizations and communities through such issues while enabling necessary change to effectively navigate and foresee future challenges (Al Eid et al., 2021; Crichton, 2008; Hacker & Washington, 2017; Sisk, 2016).

### *Complex Issues*

According to Elena Korosteleva and Irina Petrova (2022), traditional leadership, hierarchies, or intelligence approaches are no longer adequate for leaders facing complex issues.

These issues require more thoughtful, resilient practices for greater leadership capacity and foresight (2022; Burrows & Gnad, 2018). For the past twenty years, researchers have used the acronym VUCA to represent key features of our environment, such as “volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of societal development (VUCA)” (Korosteleva & Petrova, 2022, p. 138; Stiehem & Townsend, 2002; Johansen, 2007). VUCA includes:

The crises of confidence in leadership due to corporate frauds, worker’s sense of betrayal engendered by downsizing and outsourcing, economic recession, unemployment, sex scandals, and general distrust [that] are leading people on a search for spiritual solutions to ameliorate the resulting tensions” (Ahmad et al., 2018, p. 310).

The COVID-19 pandemic further compounds these features in our current environment.

Moreover, the complexity of VUCA-type challenges become compounded through the common use of social media to initiate dialogue on such matters. In their study, S.D. Arora et al. (2022) researched how social media dialogue further challenges understanding and addressing complex issues by enabling polarization and the inability to explain opinions and perspectives fully. According to this research, social media has not been the positive social sphere initially believed (S.D. Arora et al., 2022). In addition, according to Arora et al. (2022), its use has further polarized our country and world, compounding complex issues.

#### **Figure 4**

*Thematic Analysis Themes*



### The Importance of Spiritual Intelligence for Transformational Leaders

There is an undercurrent of urgency to find ways for leaders to lead differently now than in previous hierarchical or authoritative ways (Sisk, 2016; Santovec, 2013; Hacker, 2017). Many claim that SQ is critical for leaders today to support their communities and organizations to address complex issues and navigate change. For example, “the psychologists who discovered this type of intelligence say that its development guarantees the psychic health” of those with SQ (Ahmad et al., 2018, p. 309).

Through their research, Hacker and Washington (2017) found that leaders with solid self-awareness gathered through developing their SQ had more resilience to navigate complexity while ensuring that their teams accompanied them. These researchers also recognize that EQ and IQ remain relevant but are more transactional. On the other hand, SQ enables self-understanding or groundedness to change or adjust to address complexity, a type of self-mastery; therefore, “it requires the development of a keen self-awareness, the alignment of vocation with purpose, the ability to view life challenges and adversity within the context of spiritual growth, and alertness to wider patterns and connections.” (Hackert & Washington, 2017, p. 24).

Extending this research to understand how to obtain SQ and leadership capacity, as these abilities or experiences remain vague. As we have learned through this literature review, SQ is important now, but uncertainty exists about how to achieve it. This research works to address this uncertainty.

### **Gaps in the Literature**

There are gaps in the literature that this research attempts to address. First, there are minimal gaps in the literature about spirituality and spiritual practices (Baesler, 2012; Neeld, 2011). Second, there are minimal gaps in the literature about spiritual intelligence (Covey, 2004; Howard et al., 2009; Vaughan, 2002). Third, there are minimal gaps in the literature about transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2019). Finally, there is literature on leadership capacity (Covey, 2004; Lambert, 1998, 2009). However, little or no research includes all these terms and their interdependencies. I hope to address this literature gap through this study.

Moreover, there remain gaps in the literature surrounding the relevance of spiritual intelligence for leaders as the intelligence itself remains in question (Gardner, 2011). As far as a tool to measure SQ, King's (2008) research shines most, according to Skrzypinska (2020), as it "represents a set of mental abilities (as opposed to behaviors or experiences), and it has been empirically tested by King" (p. 503). However, it remains unclear to Skrzypinska (2020) whether SQ can stand independently as an intelligence; therefore, it requires further research. Atroszko et al. (2021) concur and succinctly conclude:

It suggests that the SI [SQ] theory should be revised, a new tool developed, or a more accurate measurement based on the existing theory should be created. Perhaps even the legitimacy of the construct itself may need revision. It is possible that SI [spiritual

intelligence] is not a general ability but that what is conceptualized currently as particular components of SI [spiritual intelligence] are unique and correlated variables. (p. 3601)

This study works to address these literature gaps.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study focuses on how contemplative spiritual practices enable spiritual intelligence and build transformational leadership capacity for leaders to address complex issues. Applying the research question to the theoretical frameworks created an excellent opportunity to organize my research using two spiritual intelligence assessments and the transformational leadership theory.

This research analyzed data from surveys and interviews, applying elements and concepts from three frameworks. The first framework applied is Emmons' (2000) components of spiritual intelligence, including (a) The capacity to transcend the physical and material. (b) The ability to experience heightened states of consciousness. (c) The ability to sanctify everyday experiences. (d) The ability to utilize spiritual resources to solve problems. (e) The capacity to be virtuous. Though Emmons removed the last component in subsequent studies because of further understanding it as a behavior, it remains in this study to learn the participants' concepts of developing capacity (King & DeCicco, 2009). The interview questions of this research use these five characteristics.

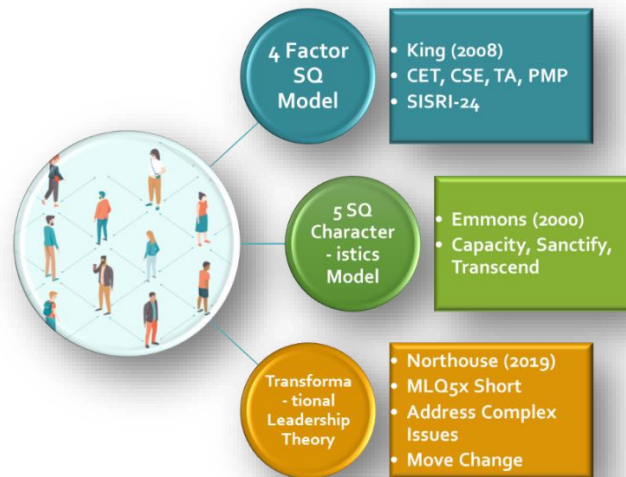
The second is King's (2008) research of a four-factor model also used to identify and measure spiritual intelligence. These elements include Critical Existential Thinking (CET), Personal Meaning Production (PMP), Transcendental Awareness (TA), and Conscious State Expansion (CES) (King, 2008). This framework uses a self-reported spiritual intelligence assessment (SISRI-24) to measure SQ. The term "attempt" is appropriate because it has the

highest utilization as an SQ measurement tool. However, recent research challenges King's findings or justifications that spiritual intelligence exists (Skrzypinska, 2020; Atroszko et al., 2021).

The final framework applied to organizing the data collection through interviews is the theory of transformational leadership as defined by Bass (1985) using the multi-factor questionnaire (MLQ) form 5x short (Northouse, 2019, p. 191). After each of these questions, a further question of how or if spiritual intelligence influenced their responses contributes to this research.

## Figure 5

### *Theoretical Framework Overview*



### **Emmons' (2000) Five Characteristics of Spiritual Intelligence Model**

This framework influenced multiple spiritual intelligence models, including King's (2008), and created a foundation for my research through conducted interviews (Appendix B). Emmons (2000) started with five core abilities mentioned in the Literature Review of this paper

and later reversed to four, dropping the capacity to engage in virtuous behavior because it refers to behavior many SQ researchers work to avoid (King, 2008). Regardless, it remains in this research because it includes the term capacity, relating to the research question, enabling learning from interview participants about their perspective as it relates to this category.

Emmons (2000) developed his spiritual intelligence model from Gardner's (1993) well-known research on multiple intelligences, where Gardner identified the following characteristics as required for any intelligence: 1) An identifiable core operation or set of operations. 2) An evolutionary history and evolutionary plausibility. 3) A characteristic pattern of development. 4) Potential isolation by brain damage. 5) The existence of persons distinguished by the striking presence or absence of the ability. 6) Susceptibility to encoding in a symbol system. 7) Support from experimental psychological investigations. 8) Support from psychometric findings.

Emmons (2000) applies these intelligence characteristics to spirituality to formulate his spiritual intelligence model.

A common criticism of Emmons' (2000) research is his association of spirituality with theological interpretations, including religion and an ultimate being or God (King & DeCicco, 2009). Building from Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligence work, his focus establishes a psychological and social science base, creating credibility.

### *The Capacity for Transcendence*

Emmons' (2000) first component of spiritual intelligence focuses on "the capacity of the person to engage in heightened or extraordinary forms of consciousness" (p. 10). Emmons (2000) interchanges his components and capacity in his research when referring to his model. When using the term component, it describes a particular group of self-awareness approaches. Capacity is about expanding or making room in our minds to build further understanding of



interaction, decision, or opportunity. This is an essential clarification of how to develop capacity individually and communally (Covey, 2004; Lambert, 1998). Connecting transcendence with capacity, Emmons (2000) further explains this connection as a fundamental synchronicity with life and humanity, which develops through building awareness. This component supports my research as it is essential for addressing or navigating complex issues.

### *The Ability to Enter into Heightened Spiritual States of Consciousness*

Through his research, Emmons (2000) aligns his first two components when describing them; however, separating them here enables greater clarification. He refers to mysticism when considering heightened spiritual states of consciousness. He continues, “Mysticism is the awareness of an ultimate reality that takes the form of a sense of oneness or unity in which all boundaries disappear, and objects are unified into a totality” (Emmons, 2000, p. 11). Again, this component is attainable because he understands that people can learn to enter heightened states of consciousness. It does not happen by divine intervention or intelligence available to limited persons (Emmons, 2000). Like the first component, this ability is essential for addressing or navigating complexity and supports my research in developing capacity.

### *The Ability to Sanctify Everyday Experiences*

The third component Emmons (2000) defines when aligning with Gardner’s (1993) intelligence definition is “The ability to invest everyday activities, events, and relationships with a sense of the sacred” (p. 3). This initial description feeds the understanding of the term sanctification, which is often associated with religion. Nevertheless, making precious everyday moments does not require a religious belief (Emmons, 2000). He goes on to further clarify by stating, “Casting in the language of intelligence enables sanctification to be viewed as expertise that people might bring to bear to solve problems (complex issues) and plan effective action

(address or navigate)” (p. 11). Again, as with the previous components, with this further clarification, Emmons (2000) brings this spiritual experience into a human ability, making it attainable.

### ***The Ability to Utilize Spiritual Resources to Solve Problems***

In this component, Emmons (2000) leans into religiosity, which eventually challenges his research and opens others to contribute toward spiritual intelligence models (King, 2008).

Though he intertwines religion and spirituality, he continues his theme of how SQ is attainable through utilizing spiritual resources (such as contemplative spiritual practices) (Emmons, 2000).

Though he does not specify the type of spiritual resources for problem-solving, Emmons (2000) does share how the resources can be used by stating that “effective coping entails the

implementation of problem-solving skills” and “these are abilities that are required when prior goals are abandoned, and new goals are adopted” (p. 12). An interpretation of this component

can be that when things change or become more complex than expected, spiritual resources can help work through the change or transition. In theory, therefore, if spiritual resources are

accessible, the ability to problem-solve changes or address complex issues is accessible.

### ***The Capacity to Engage in Virtuous Behavior***

The fifth and final component of Emmons’ (2000) spiritual intelligence model again refers to a capacity or an ability to build awareness or understanding. He defines this component

by describing the desired behavior as “to show forgiveness, to express gratitude, to exhibit humility, to be compassionate, and to display sacrificial love” (Emmons, 2000, p.12). He

supports these behaviors as representative of all major religions, which may be true but connects this intelligence to religion and behaviors SQ researchers typically avoid (King, 2008). The

mutual connection to this paper is how this capacity becomes “sources of human strength that

enable people to function effectively in the world” (Emmons, 2000, p. 13). Like all the previous components, Emmons (2000) ensures that spiritual intelligence is attainable.

### **King’s (2008) Four-Factor Spiritual Intelligence Model**

King (2008) conducted and connected his extensive research of intelligence and spirituality to identify and develop a four-factor model to measure spiritual intelligence, building from Emmons’s (2000) premise that SQ exists. In addition, he ensured that his instrument and framework consider spiritual practice, experience, adaptation, contemplation, religiosity, and ecumenical approaches. Finally, King and DeCicco (2009) contend that this model is “evidence to support the notion that spiritual intelligence not only involves existential capacities but that it exists as a set of mental abilities that are distinct from behavioral traits and experiences” (p. 69).

Though there are other indexes and self-assessments for SQ, King’s work is readily available and more known, as previously noted (Skrzypinska, 2020). Each factor holds a series of questions described in the Methods section. These questions mix with other factors and questions within the assessment to avoid associated questions asked together while taking the assessment (King, 2008). According to Atroszko et al. (2021), several studies utilize King’s work and fluctuating applied facts to understand further how to measure spiritual intelligence.

### ***Critical Existential Thinking***

King (2008) defines critical existential thinking as the first category in his research. He notes that “the ability to contemplate existential issues can serve as a source of adaptation in various situations” (King & DeCicco, 2009, p. 84). Existential thinking can consider one’s existence while considering broader questions beyond oneself and one’s environment. The word critical is an essential addition, as King (2008) notes:

Existential thinking must be critical and involve deep contemplation and analysis of such issues. Simply asking questions does not demonstrate complete mastery of this ability.

One must be able to contemplate such existential issues using critical thinking, and in some cases come to original conclusions or personal philosophies regarding existence and reality, perhaps integrating scientific knowledge and personal experience. (p. 58)

Further, King (2008) notes the importance of having the capacity to think critically and contemplatively as a vital attribute of this factor, encompassing SQ. He delineates, “This should also help to better differentiate between individuals who simply have passing thoughts or questions regarding existential issues and those who can analyze the issues and come to conclusions of their own” (King, 2008, p. 59).

### *Personal Meaning Production*

In the second category King (2008) defines personal meaning production in his spiritual intelligence model as the mental capacity to make meaning. This capacity is critical to addressing, navigating, or preventing complex issues because it represents the effort to make sense of one’s inner life and outer environment. King and DeCicco (2009) further explain:

Therefore, it is quite reasonable to suggest that a high capacity for personal meaning production would be quite adaptive in dealing with such existential problems. In fact, if this ability were highly cultivated, it would likely prevent such a crisis or vacuum from ever fully developing, as it would provide an individual with seemingly endless sources of personal meaning and purpose. (p. 85)

King (2008) continues with this to claim that it enables “the ability to construct purpose as well” (p. 60), further emphasizing representation SQ. This category furthers Emmons’ (2000) SQ research on the importance of creating a purpose.

### *Transcendental Awareness*

King's (2008) third category in his model to identify and measure SQ is transcendental awareness. This category relates to Emmons (2000) as the ability or "awareness of that which is beyond the physical or material" yet differs as it does not connect to a religion or a higher being (King, 2008, p. 63). Transcendental awareness is our ability to move beyond our physical and material circumstances to a mental state broader than ourselves, our lives, our environment, and our situation daily (Emmons, 2000; King, 2008; Skrzypinska, 2020; Atroszko et al., 2021). This heightened awareness can occur occasionally or multiple times a day, and King (2008) recognizes this as a necessary experience as part of spiritual intelligence.

### *Conscious State Expansion*

Conscious State Expansion is the final category of King's (2008) spiritual intelligence model. It measures coping with challenging or stressful situations, such as addressing or navigating complex issues. He further claims: "These states (various organizations of human consciousness) are often described as levels of consciousness, in order to comparatively specify the amount of awareness (which can include self-awareness, environmental awareness, spiritual awareness, or some combination of these) and arousal involved" (King, 2008, p. 72). King's (2008) description of this category aligns with Vaughan's (2002) SQ definition, referring to awareness or connection to larger entities than us.

### **Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985)**

As noted previously, there are several reliable measurements and frameworks of spiritual intelligence and their association with various leadership theories, yet transformational leadership theory is the most frequently applied (Christ-Lakin, 2010; Howard et al., 2009; Krisnanda & Surya, 2019). Transformational leadership theory is essential to guide my research

because it is the leadership approach most likely to change and transform people. Like the definition of contemplative spiritual practice to transform (Benner, 2012), transformational leadership theory is necessary to enable organizations and communities to address complex issues and move change (Bell et al., 2022; Morton, 2020; Northouse, 2019; Wigglesworth, 2004). In addition, this theory considers treating followers like human beings by supporting their emotions, values, and ethics while moving the organization to accomplish short and long-term goals (Northouse, 2019).

This theory is the most mature theoretical framework within this research, which Burns (1978) developed. Bass (1985) built on Burn's (1978) research by developing the multi-factor leadership questionnaire (MLQ). This questionnaire identifies three leadership approaches: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. My research applies only the transformational leadership questions through interviews.

Bass (1985) later partnered with other experts to further vet his initial findings of seven factors of this leadership style to six (Avolio et al., 1999). For this study and the focus on transformation, the four factors associated with transformational leadership enable further understanding of my research by aligning the spiritual intelligence models of Emmons (2000) and King (2008). Transformational leadership includes idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio et al., 1999).

### *Idealized Influence*

This factor represents charisma considering the “emotional component of leadership,” enabling leaders to be strong role models to make moral and ethical decisions (Northouse, 2019, p. 169). This factor measures idealized influence through two sub-components called attributional and behavioral. This measure encompasses the leader's ability to support a shared

vision. Finally, this factor aligns with my research because it represents how leaders contribute their values and ethics to the health and well-being of their organizations, like the hypothesis of spiritual intelligence shared previously (Howard et al., 2009).

### ***Inspirational Motivation***

The second factor from Bass's (1985) research focuses on the leader's ability to accomplish more than expected due to enthusiasm and confidence in the future. While leading followers to commit and share organizational vision, leaders use "symbols and emotional appeals to focus group members' efforts to achieve more than they would in their self-interest" (Northouse, 2019, p. 171). This factor aligns with my research in our shared belief in the future and our confidence in addressing complex issues. Much like spiritual intelligence, inspirational motivation maintains the confidence that all will be well.

### ***Intellectual Stimulation***

The third factor stimulates leaders and followers to individually be creative and innovative while questioning or challenging how leadership or the organization addresses issues. This transformational leadership factor encourages leaders and followers to develop solutions while considering organizational goals and objectives. Having the capacity to come to original conclusions is like King's (2008) critical existential thinking. This factor further aligns with my research because of our shared emphasis on and encouragement of personal wisdom. This, of course, is part of spiritual intelligence.

### ***Individualized Consideration***

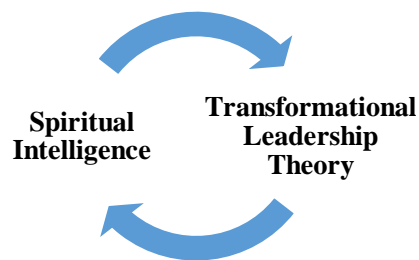
The final factor in the transformational leadership theory applied in this research is individualized consideration because it measures how leaders support their followers (Northouse, 2019). Support can include career development, delegation of tasks, emotional support, and

mentoring to further enable followers to become all they can. This factor aligns with my research because of the awareness of our relationships with each other, much like spiritual intelligence (Vaughan, 2002).

In summary, transformational leadership theory is a viable framework for this research. It connects to spiritual intelligence in understanding that this leadership approach is necessary to address complex issues. As noted above, SQ provides the grounding capacity necessary for transformational leadership theory in each of that theory's factors (Christ-Lakin, 2010; Howard et al., 2009; Krisnanda & Surya, 2019).

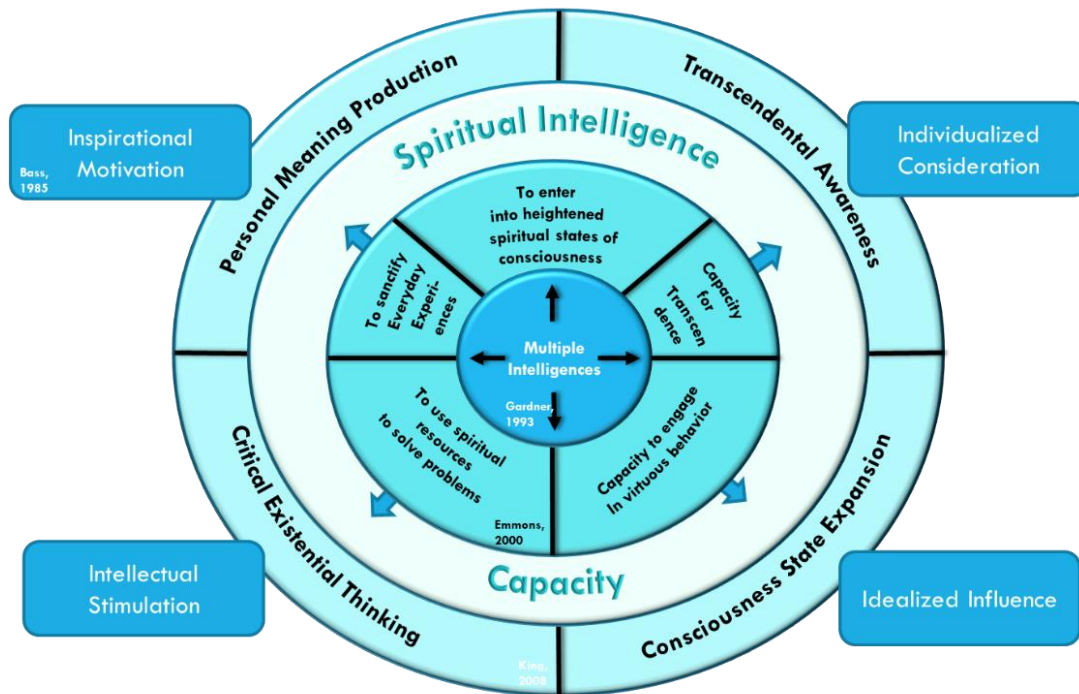
### **Figure 6**

*Interdependencies of SQ and Transformational Leadership Theory*



In conclusion, the three theoretical frameworks are interdependent in multiple ways and build on one another, starting with Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligence theory, represented in Figure 5. This figure represents substantiating synergies from Emmons (2000) SQ characteristics to King's (2008) SQ factors and finally to Bass's (1985) transformational leadership theory factors, creating a firm foundation for this research. This theoretical framework aids in determining how contemplative spiritual practices enable spiritual intelligence to build transformational leadership capacity for organizations to address complex issues.



**Figure 7***Theoretical Framework Interdependencies*

### Method

Applying the theoretical framework described above provides a foundation as this study explores the relevancy of spiritual intelligence to address today's complex issues. Through qualitative research methods and reflexive thematic analysis, this research surveyed and interviewed informal and formal leaders with undergraduate degrees who studied or are studying contemplative spiritual practices at St. Catherine University or similar institutions.

This study collected data from

- Twenty-eight completed surveys,
- Two partially completed surveys, and
- Eight interviews described as

- semi-scripted
- one-to-one
- face to face
- online
- recorded

With an initial email to qualifying participants, the program director of graduate Theology, William McDonough S.T.D., introduces the study and encourages participation. He distributed emails to two groups; the first included previous or current students at St. Catherine University, and the second included leaders in the Lilly Grant. Through this grant, participating faith communities study contemplative spiritual practices within the greater Twin Cities of Minnesota. I followed his email with one of my own, providing more details about this study and an attached consent form for participants to review, sign, and email back if they were interested (See Appendix C for the consent form). Once I received the signed consent form, I sent an individual email to the willing participant sharing gratefulness, further instructions about participating in the survey, and a link to the poster calling for participants (Appendix E). The poster contains more information about this research and a link to the survey (See Appendix A for survey questions).

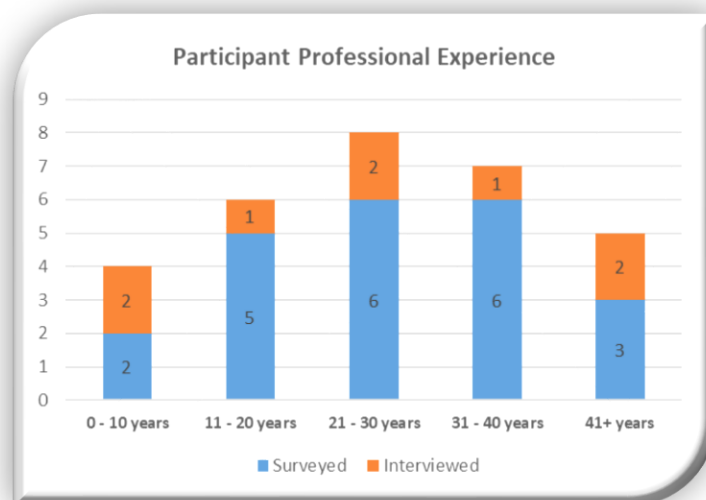
The survey took 20 – 30 minutes and provided an option to share contact information if there was interest in participating in online face-to-face interviews to receive a \$25 gift card. Twenty-eight participants provided contact information to participate. The eight selected interview participants received an email through the provided email addresses to schedule an interview on Zoom, requesting available times of 60 minutes. Though not a part of my original intent, I selected interview participants by demographics, including age, ethnicity, and leadership responsibility, to ensure a diverse group (Refer to Tables 4, 7, & 11 below). As Dr. William

McDonough and I knew the participants, we knew their ethnicity as they shared it with us in class or through personal conversations. This research did not capture ethnicity.

For this study, I differentiated between personal and professional leadership experience to understand if the participants separated their lives this way. Also, I provided informal and formal leadership definitions to ensure understanding. I did this because sometimes people hold informal leadership roles that do not give them authority yet expect them to be able to lead others to a goal or destination. Both informal and formal leadership experiences in personal or professional settings are relevant to this research and collected through the survey asking for professional working experience in five-year ranges, informal leadership experience in five-year ranges, and formal leadership experience in five-year ranges. Referring to the following three tables representing this collected data of all thirty participants, note that the interviewed participants' professional and leadership experiences align with the survey participants.

**Table 1:**

*Professional Experience by Survey & Interview Participants*



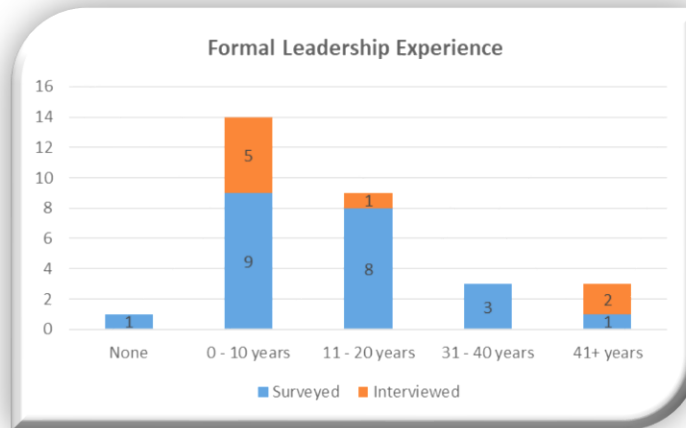
**Table 2:**

*Informal Leadership Experience by Survey and Interview Participants*



**Table 3**

*Formal Leadership Experience by Survey and Interview Participants*



**Participants**

Ethical considerations for this study included anonymity, voluntary participation, and the freedom to step out of the study at any time. To ensure clarity of these considerations, I

thoroughly described them in the consent letter, the survey, and verbally before each interview. Finally, I encouraged participation in this research to share the experiences of contemplative spiritual practices so others may learn from their stories.

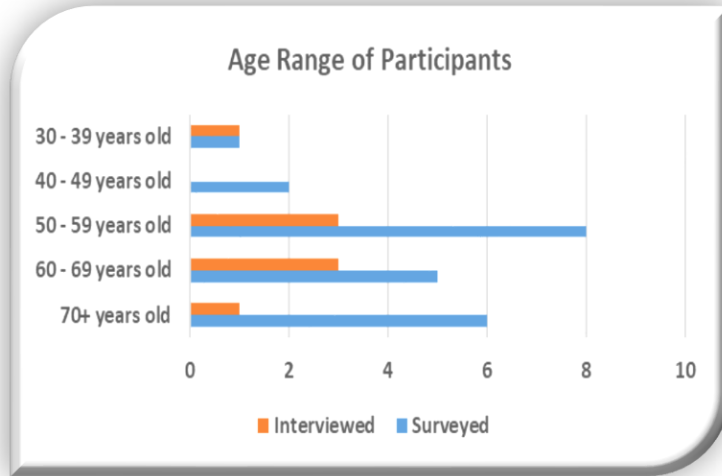
Through the survey, I obtained demographic information by including

- age using a decade age range,
- education completed,
- sex assignment at birth,
- gender identification,
- gender description,
- sexuality description,
- marital status,
- geographic location of their home, and
- the name of the school last attended or attending.

Below are the demographics and characteristics of all thirty participants in table form. As St. Catherine University contemplative spiritual practice education is available online and, in the classroom, some participants are from outside Minnesota. The following tables provide the numerical detail of the described demographics. As noted by the tables, most participants were heterosexual, married, cisgendered women over 50 years of age and highly educated.

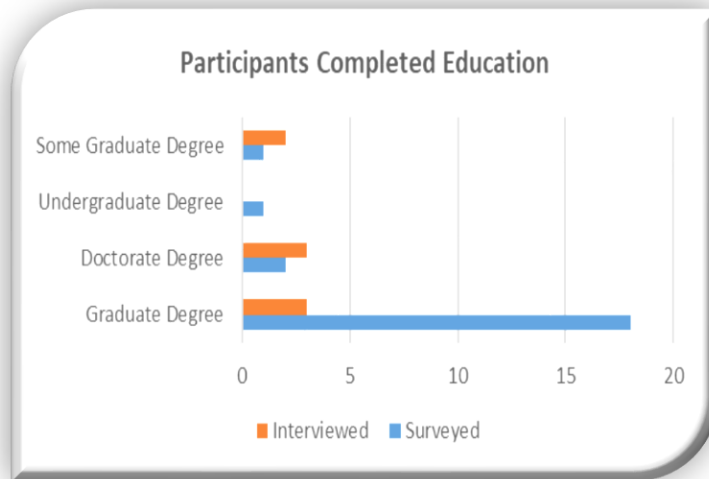
**Table 4:**

*Age Range by Survey and Interview Participants*



**Table 5:**

*Completed Education by Survey and Interview Participants*



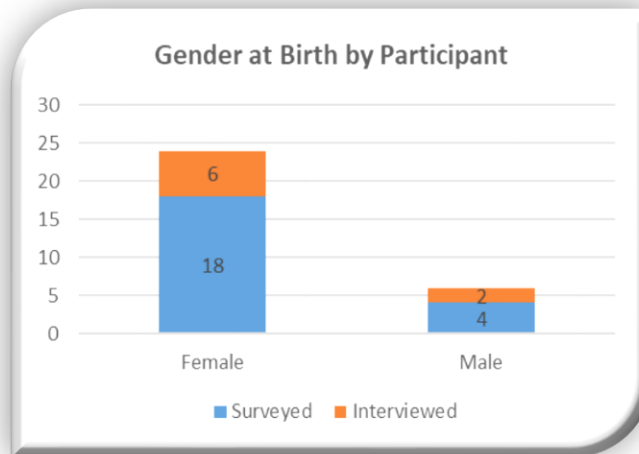
**Table 6:**

*Geographic Location by Survey & Interview Participants*



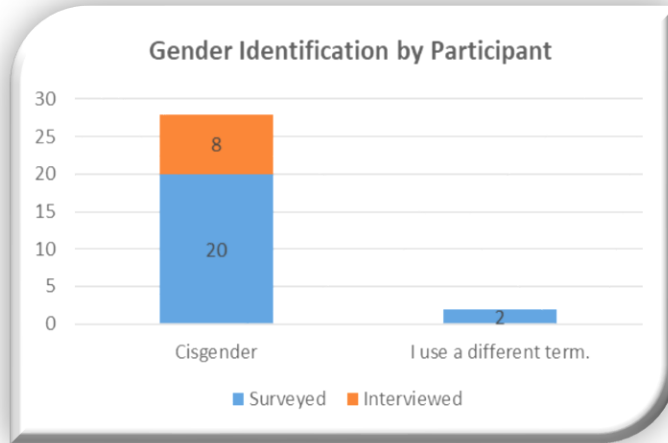
**Table 7:**

*Gender Assigned at Birth by Survey & Interview Participants*



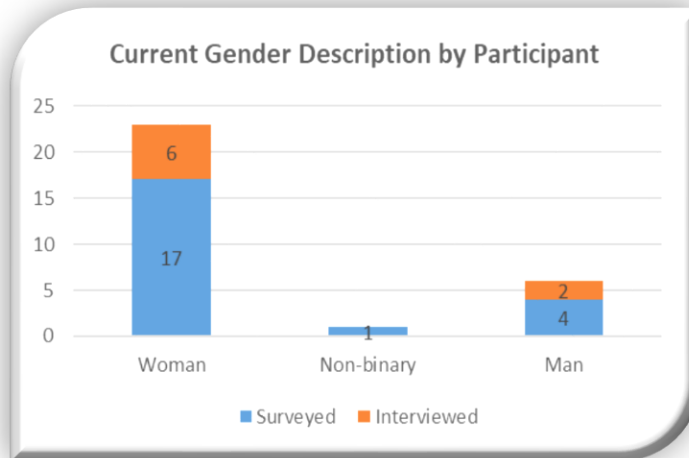
**Table 8:**

*Gender Identification by Survey & Interview Participants*



**Table 9:**

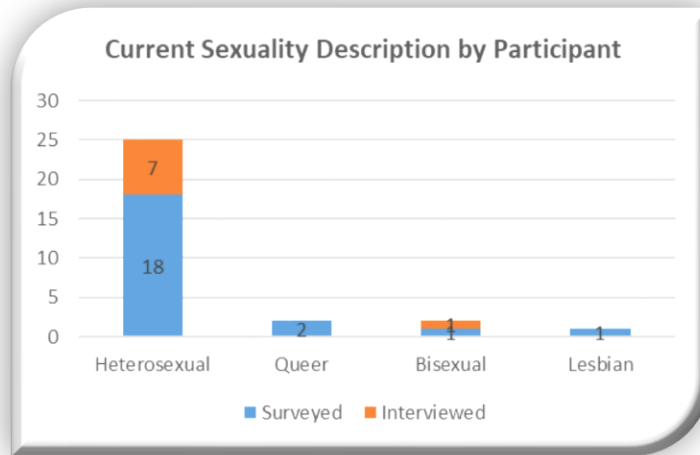
*Current Gender by Survey & Interview Participants*



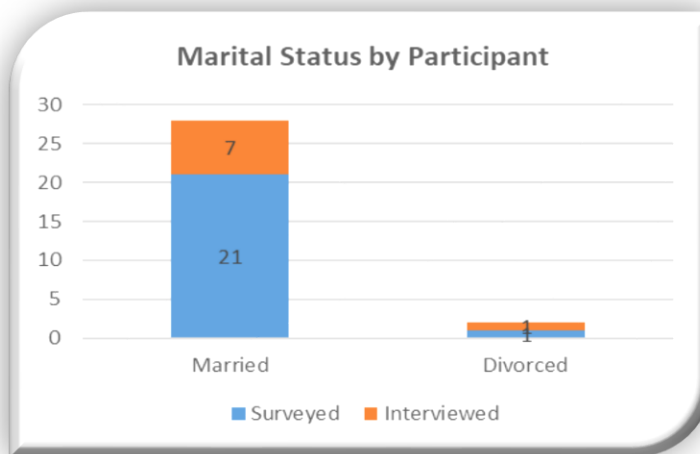
**Table 10:**

*Current Sexuality by Survey & Interview Participants*





**Table 11:**  
*Marital Status of Survey & Interview Participants*



**Data Gathering & Analysis**

This study used surveys and interviews as data-gathering tools to provide in-depth information about participants’ experiences with contemplative spiritual practices. The data collection site included St. Catherine University and other similar organizations that provide contemplative spiritual practices in the Twin Cities area.

*Survey*

This survey captured the following:

- Characteristics
- Demographics
- SISRI-24 SQ self-assessment data,
- Contemplative spiritual practice experience.

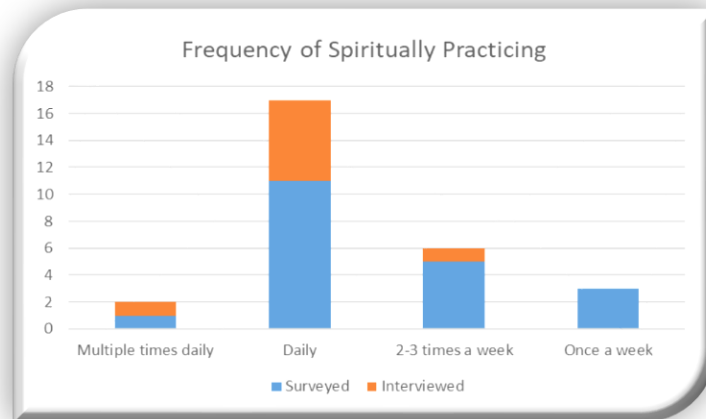
King’s (2008) Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24) collected participants’ spiritual intelligence, as this tool is the briefest assessment yet proven to assess SQ effectively (Skrzypinska, 2020). In addition, this survey addressed the research question by capturing participants’ contemplative spiritual practices and frequency. Finally, three open-ended questions asked how these practices affected their personal and professional lives after completing a contemplative spiritual practice. Below is a table representing participants’ experience with contemplative spiritual practices and the frequency of practice.

**Table 12**

*Participant Duration Using Contemplative Spiritual Practices*



**Table 13**

*Participants' Frequency of Using Spiritual Practices*

This research used a survey software tool provided by St. Catherine University called Qualtrics. This software is customizable to appropriately display the characteristics, demographic, SISRI-24, and open-ended questions mentioned previously. Qualtrics provides a link to share with the participants to complete the survey and capture their responses for later analysis. Finally, Qualtrics provided a weekly email of completed surveys keeping me updated to determine when to close the survey.

The SISRI-24 used a 5-point Likert scale (King, 2008):

- 0-Not at all true of me
- 1-Not very true of me
- 2-Somewhat true of me
- 3-Very true of me
- 4-Completely true of me

Sample questions included: “I am aware of a deeper connection between myself and other people” and “When I experience failure, I am still able to find meaning in it” (King, 2008).

The complete survey with all twenty-four questions is in the four dimensions as follows:

- Critical Existential Thinking (CET) included questions 1, 3, 5, 9, 13, 17, and 21,

- Personal Meaning Production (PMP) included questions 7, 11, 15, 19, and 21,
- Transcendental Awareness (TA) included questions 2, 6, 10, 14, 18, 20, and 22, with question 6 reversing the Likert Scale, and
- Conscious State Expansion (CSE) included questions 4, 8, 12, 16, and 24 (King, 2008).

Higher scores of the SISRI-24 lean towards a perceived spiritual intelligence than lower scores. Once thirty participants completed the survey, I closed the survey and moved the data to an Excel spreadsheet stored on St. Catherine University's OneDrive. From there, I moved the data to a coding and data management software called DeDoose for further analysis. The data from the interviews, the second data collection tool for this research, is also in DeDoose. To ensure participant confidentiality, no contact information provided in the survey exists outside Qualtrics.

### *Interview*

The second data collection is another primary data source for this research. As spiritual intelligence and transformational leadership capacity are not frequently used words yet, the interviews provided a space for conversation to ensure understanding of key terms. Also, the interviews had structured questions and allowed for conversation around the questions, which provided unexpected findings. Finally, one-on-one interviews provided the needed "personal perspectives of participants" where "they are not likely to share these perspectives in a group setting" (Creswell & Creswell, 2021, p. 131). Additionally, I created a casual atmosphere to get the "interviewee chatting comfortably" and to "come away with all the data...intended but also interesting and unexpected data" that emerged and shared later in this paper (O'Leary, 2021, p. 251). All interviews were online, enabling various geographic locations to participate while allowing recording and transcribing through Zoom.

Spirituality can be a personal topic, so approaching spiritual intelligence may be tender. The interview questions consider this vulnerability permitting participants to stop sharing at any time. Having studied spirituality for years, I witnessed emotional conversations when sharing spiritual stories. It was essential, therefore, to ensure the anonymity of participants for the primary data collection while gaining informed consent before each interview. To mitigate risk and maintain confidentiality, participants provided pseudonyms at the start of each interview. During the interviews, file labeling, and quotes, we used pseudonyms. To further confidentiality, reported findings do not use pseudonyms.

Interview questions included Emmons's (2000) five spiritual intelligence characteristics converted into open-ended questions and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 5X-Short of only the Transformational Leadership four factors (Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2019). Interview participants used a 5-point Likert Scale provided in the questionnaire, including

- 0-Not at all
- 1-Once in a while
- 2-Sometimes
- 3-Fairly Often
- 4-Frequently, if not Always.

Participants used the scale to self-assess themselves to each of the MLQ-5x four factors (Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2019). Applying the MLQ Form 5x-Short enabled me to understand their understanding of their leadership. I probed for additional information to learn how or if participants' spiritual practices influenced their leadership experiences by using two associated open-ended questions after each MLQ-5x question, probing for additional information (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). They included "Describe how or if your spiritual intelligence affects your rating." and "Describe how or if your spiritual intelligence affects your ability to go beyond self-

interest.” (See Appendix B) These questions enabled further understanding of the research question.

Finally, I conducted and recorded interviews in Zoom. Also, I reviewed and transcribed in Zoom, ensuring an accurate representation of the interview participants’ responses. These transcribed responses remain on St. Catherine University’s OneDrive for the next few months, aligning with the Internal Review Board (IRB) approved procedure. The pseudonym table follows the exact timing.

### **Data Analysis Method**

Themes emerged from the collected qualitative data from the two tools. These themes represent the participants' opinions, attitudes, and conscious experiences (Crichton, 2008; Spickard, 2017). Through respondent-centered analysis, in vivo and internal coding helped to ensure an understanding of participants’ feedback and input (Spickard, 2017). Through hand coding and research software of the input, over 60 codes developed. The platform to identify themes, patterns, and interconnections through assigned codes that surfaced through the analysis. Qualitative research, through coding interview responses and the completed surveys, enabled an understanding of the leaders using or applying their SQ in various parts of their lives while identifying correlations with transformational leadership (O’Leary, 2021). I followed Creswell’s (2021) approach to:

1. read all data gathered,
2. divide the text into groups of information,
3. label groups with codes,
4. identify any overlap and regroup if necessary, and
5. reduce codes into themes (p. 162).

The existing literature informed my understanding and definition of each theme that emerged through the data analysis, especially spiritual intelligence and transformational

leadership capacity. Though the participants may not be aware of these terms, the survey and interviews enabled thinking and conversation. to further each participant's spiritual intelligence, knowingly or unknowingly. As King (2008) states, "If we are to name the mental ability which underlies the transcendent aspects of spirituality, it must be the ability to recognize or perceive these transcendent dimensions and one's relationship to them" (p. 64). This mental ability strengthened through the survey and interviews as each participant responded to the provided questions. These responses created the themes of this research and applied them to the three frameworks mentioned previously. The findings discussed below are the key themes that emerged from this process.

### **Limitations**

Though thirty participants were involved in this research, their spiritual and leadership views cannot represent the broad experiences others may have or interpret for themselves involving these topics. This study is an initial inquiry into the influence and relationship of contemplative spiritual practices on enabling spiritual intelligence and building transformational leadership capacity. Also, this study represents qualitative research through enough data available for quantitative analysis, which may solidify the experiences and relationships previously mentioned. In addition, this research provided data for those using contemplative spiritual practices only and not data from similar individuals who have not experienced these practices. It initiates some understanding of how spiritual intelligence is an effective tool for transformational leaders seeking to address or navigate complex issues. There remains hope for SQ to cross the established policy barriers created by organizations due to the wrong perception of spirituality as synonymous with religion.

## Findings

My research explored how contemplative spiritual practices enable spiritual intelligence (SQ) to build transformational leadership capacity to help organizations address complex issues. In addition, my research applied two spiritual intelligence models and the transformational leadership theory. Applying these frameworks identified interdependencies supported through participants' input to surveys and interviews applying qualitative research. Finally, my research suggests ways to extend the study of achieving SQ and transformational leadership capacity.

This research and analysis enabled me to identify five key themes with associated subthemes: *Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable the Capacity to See More Deeply and Broadly*; *Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable Spiritual Intelligence for Leaders*; *Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable the Capacity to Help Others*; *Access to a Spiritual Community Enables Spiritual Intelligence*; and *Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable Navigation or Solution of Complex Issues*. Within each of these themes are subthemes that further describe participants' input.

### **Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable the Capacity to See More Deeply and Broadly**

Most participants shared how contemplative spiritual practices enabled them to see or review previous events in their minds. Moreover, most of the participants feel more profoundly using the practices. Most shared how the contemplative spiritual practices broadened their understanding of what occurred and how they felt and contemplated their response to those events. One survey participant shared their feelings after completing a contemplative spiritual practice: feel more grounded, centered, and aware of my connection to the source. My mind feels clearer, and ideas and more profound understandings emerge from (seemingly) nowhere.”

Interview participants responded similarly to this thought: “It allows me to focus on some of the



deeper questions and longings of my soul. And explore the depths of those places.” Another shared, “So, all those contemplative practices in one way or another give me nourishment to do more, to be more, and if you cut off those practices, you cut off that life force.” Another agreed, “They’re integral. I don’t think I had those capacities before starting the contemplative practices.”

Four examples of participant input represent how contemplative spiritual practices provided the capacity to deepen and broaden our understanding. I also identified four subthemes from participant input. The subthemes include *Enables Critical Existential Thinking (CET)*; *the Capacity to Be Virtuous*; *the Capacity to Transcend Our Environments*; and *the Ability to Reframe Our Perspective*.

#### ***Enables Critical Existential Thinking (CET)***

This subtheme represents King’s (2008) CET factor. This is a subtheme because most participants (63%) responded to the seven questions with one of the top two ratings of either 4-Completely True of Me or 3-Very True for Me. So, most respondents have experienced critical existential thinking, and their participation in contemplative spiritual practices enabled this experience (see Table 8). Further comments to open-ended questions regarding contemplative spiritual practices within the survey included, “They create a baseline from which I operate the rest of the day. They hydrate my soul.” Another shared: “They have given me an awareness of the divine and self that has opened up greater compassion, grace, and love.”

#### ***Capacity to Be Virtuous***

This subtheme aligns with the interview participants’ input and Emmons’ (2000) five components of SQ. During the interview, participants shared how they develop and maintain their capacity to be virtuous through contemplative spiritual practices. While practicing,

participants often defined or considered their values and expectations of themselves. Approaches they took to do this ranged from paying attention to their souls through a checklist for well-being to identifying when they may be straying from their virtues. Participants also shared how their virtues enable them to support others while fortifying their capacity to be virtuous, as noted below:

It is helpful in terms of the relational elements at work. Coming into situations that could include stress or anxiety, there is a lot of help there in grounded spirituality, an awareness of other people, and the things they could be dealing with outside of what is immediately visible or present. And then, if I'm moving away from those virtues and having the sensitivity to recognizing it, I may step back to move closer in that direction.

Also shared by all participants, but represented well by this one was the contemplative practices encouraged "slowing down enough so that you can be more present to all of it." Slowing down creates a capacity to understand if virtues need adjusting, as shared below:

Those virtues are not set in stone or anything. I think that's something that continues to develop as I explore through spiritual practices who I am, what I love, and how I feel loved. So, it's a process of continual, hopefully, growth.

### ***Capacity to Transcend Our Environments***

As a component of SQ (Emmons, 2000), this subtheme describes how interview participants enabled themselves to step out of the physical and material using contemplative spiritual practices to think through a situation mindfully and adjust perspective, if necessary, to either navigate or change it. One participant shared that this is an important ability, "We can't always control our environment, but we must do to the extent that we can. If we want to transcend what's right in front of our faces." Another furthered this thought, "it would be

consistent practices in my spiritual life, consistently translating an experience of my day to be transcendental and contemplative.” Other participants shared how daily contemplative spiritual practices set the tone for their day and enabled them to “see it from a godly perspective because sometimes I get so caught up in the circumstances, situations, or decisions that I don't get to broaden and deepen my view.”

Having the capacity to transcend environments through contemplative spiritual practices enabled participants to be “able to really take a step back and develop awareness and maybe transcend the physical or immediate, and move into what feels like a deeper, more timeless space of understanding.” Others shared how contemplative spiritual practices enabled them to slow down to feel the presence of something greater than themselves and look for patterns of an experience, pulling them out of a situation or an environment. All interviewed participants shared how this experience enabled them to gain or adjust perspective. An example shared:

Sometimes it is sitting in my basement in silence with my knitting. And just silence and being with God but talking to God in the process. I feel otherly. I feel this connection to something bigger, broader, and deeper, a reminder that God is.

Participants described how practices expanded their capacity or possibility to cope “It expands the context and helps me to open it a little bit more to make a bigger container.”

Another shared a similar perspective:

Again, it gets your mind off the day-to-day - that's how contemplative practices work. It's about a way to broaden and deepen beyond the material. Contemplative practices help get you beyond that the physical and material. It's a tool.”

As described, not only are contemplative spiritual practices tools that help transcend environments, but they can also evolve into habits, further enhancing capacity. One interview

participant shared, “One of the things that come into the practices is the notion of ritual, and you can debate what's a practice and what's a ritual; I think practices are habit.” And as habits, contemplative spiritual practices can work the soul like physical training; like a habit, practices develop the capacity to transcend, as shared below by several participants:

It feels akin to training, physically like running. After a while of doing it or figuring out some of the mechanics, you can develop a greater capacity to put more distance in, to go faster. I think it's similar in my experience with spiritual transcendence.

### *Ability to Reframe Perspective*

Interview participants shared how they analyze or reshape their perspective of a situation through contemplative spiritual practices. Participants were mindful of this ability for two reasons, first, to reframe their perspective, gain greater self-awareness, and second to reframe their perspective to understand or be present to others. Contemplative spiritual practices benefitted most participants “because it helps me to move from my limited space of experience and opinion and helps me to expand assumptions.” Furthering this thought, another participant shared:

Looking to broaden and deepen my relationship with God and my perspective on how to approach circumstances and situations. I’m just open to seeing what's out there and what might aid me in doing better at looking at a situation from all sides, from all perspectives, and contemplative practices is a tool to help with that.

Sometimes, a specific spiritual practice assisted with reframing perspectives for some of the participants, such as “the examen has been helpful for asking questions and solving problems; focusing on where I felt close to joy or to the divine, and maybe where I felt distant can help shed some light on things in a new way.” Most participants shared how they analyzed or adjusted

their perspective by “questioning within a problem or a space of discernment, or trying to figure out what's underneath, or underlying a situation. Sifting through what's important to hold and what should just fall through that net and not be of concern.”

In addition, interview participants shared how contemplative spiritual practices enabled their ability to reframe perspectives to understand others. Some participants shared the importance of “remaining very open to how other people deepen their lives through whatever they do to help them find meaning.” Complementing this finding is the desire for radical inclusion, which according to one participant, enables the ability to reframe perspectives by broadening their worldview:

If you look at all the research on wisdom, what tends to raise you up a level is when you understand that your worldview is no longer explaining things for you. And I think the soulful practices and the radical inclusion are the things that make you realize that – “Oh, not everyone's having the same experience I'm having in the same room.” And so, my worldview needs some adjustment.

To further support this subtheme, some participants shared the importance of reframing their perspective as having curiosity and compassion for others. They stated that reframing perspectives enabled them “to have the empathy or compassion for that person to be curious about what happened to them.” Through this effort, many participants feel closer to their values trying to understand others’ perspectives.

In summary, most participants believed contemplative spiritual practices enabled the capacity to experience life more deeply and broadly.” Several participants concurred with how the practices “expand thinking around something.” A survey participant’s remarks are a good summary of all of this:

Some practices help me to recognize an emotion that may be present in my field of awareness. As I am able, I attend to this emotion and often corresponding body sensations to feel its manifestation in my body and allow its presence to share information. Ultimately through processing this emotion and engaging in the spiritual practice, I feel the grounding through my body. The energy behind the emotion (usually a protective response) is released safely and I experience much more ease.

### **Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable Spiritual Intelligence for Leaders**

This theme focuses on spiritual intelligence and its effect on leaders who use contemplative spiritual practices to develop this intelligence. This theme is the strongest of all the findings and represents input from all interviewed participants. For example, one participant shared that spiritual intelligence “has grown me as a leader, so it has impacted my organization because it’s changed me as a leader. Spiritual intelligence causes me to get outside of my own head and my own issues around things.” Another participant shared, “I feel like my spiritual intelligence helps me seek my own conclusions - an informed conclusion versus just going along with whatever is being said. To invite myself to ask that question, or to be more informed.” Other similar experiences by most of the interviewed participants about spiritual intelligence shared this thought: “one of the major lenses I use in my professional life.” And finally, “That's what's gonna get me to the moral and ethical is my spiritual intelligence, not my opinion.”

The participants in this study shared how contemplative spiritual practices furthered their understanding of spiritual intelligence and its effects on them as leaders. The question remains how spiritual intelligence is enabled in leaders. Emmons (2000) and King (2008) noted that spiritual intelligence brings awareness of self and other types of awareness, as represented by participant input. Survey and interview participant input represent three subthemes:

*Transcendental Awareness, Conscious State Expansion & Heightened States of Awareness, and Enhanced Self-Awareness.*

***Transcendental Awareness (TA)***

In the SISRI-24 portion of the survey, seven questions measure TA. Twenty-four of the 30 participants (80%) responded to the seven TA-related questions with 4-Completely true for me or 3-Very True for Me. Question examples include: “I recognize aspects of myself that are deeper than my physical body” and “I am highly aware of nonmaterial aspects of life.” Many survey responses share the experience of this awareness: “Contemplative spiritual practices create a deep awareness of the Spirit within me, around me, and those I encounter each day. I experience a sense of inner peace and openness to the day, the moment.” Another survey respondent reported, “They help me feel at one with the source of all life.” A typical description shared by many participants is how contemplative spiritual practices “ground me; they carry me through the day, consciously and unconsciously; they help open my ability to "spiritual seeing"; they bring me back to homeostasis; they resonate as a small flame inside, always present and calling.”

Most interviewed participants explained their transcendental awareness as follows:

Being able to be alone, to be quiet, to let your mind be at rest so that God can do what God does so well. You can't do it through will or intention. You just have to make it happen through availability.

A connection to how that happens included “looking for guidance from the spirit. Internally acknowledging the presence of the spirit. I think the practices build that and enable that.”

So, transcendental awareness and spiritual intelligence co-mingle as described by an interview participant below:

Spiritual intelligence for me in this space allows me to see beyond some of the challenges that are more vocal and more present and to see the beautiful things, I think, that are harder to uncover unless you're able or willing to go deeper.

Also, noted here through another participant:

I don't know how I consciously think of my spiritual intelligence; it's just kind of automatic for me. When I think about spiritual intelligence, I think about my ability to look at these projects or whatever I'm working on to get the broadest perspective and the most profound interaction with the Divine.

These findings show how transcendental awareness and spiritual intelligence are present through contemplative spiritual practices. To complement this finding, heightened states of awareness, like CES, are also enabled through contemplative spiritual practices.

#### *Conscious State Expansion (CES) & Heightened States of Awareness*

Another finding, through participant input, is how contemplative spiritual practices enable CES or heightened states of awareness. According to King (2008), expanding consciousness is one of four factors representing spiritual intelligence as measured in the SISRI-24. Of the 30 participants, 11 rated this category either a 4-Completely True for Me or 3-Very True for Me. Two of the five questions include “I am able to move freely between levels of consciousness or awareness” and “I am able to enter higher states of consciousness or awareness.” Self-assessment results suggested that this factor is more challenging to accomplish for participants than the previous two factors in King’s (2008) model. In addition, only two of the eight interviewed participants mention how easy it is for them to experience heightened states of consciousness using contemplative spiritual practices. They shared: “As I've evolved, that's just kind of more of a constant state that I have.” Another interview participant added:



It is maybe the reflex of it, or just being close to the stream of that. I feel like it is going back to the example of the muscle, like it just feels ready and present to me to allow that space to exist. It is not as hard to get to that space when you're already looking for or open to it.

However, when questions use the word awareness, most interview participants explained these experiences more easily and readily. As one summarized, "It's made more possible and visible by developing an awareness around the situation and taking the time and effort to draw that to its conclusion or at least further along down the line." Another described heightened awareness as:

And so those heightened states sometimes come through in a visual, things when your eyes are closed. That is the most beautiful experience I have of entering this space that is fully enveloping me in love and warmth. I have to not concentrate on how excited I am because then I'll get sucked right back out of that state and I won't be there anymore. I'm a learner on that path.

A survey respondent describes how they achieved heightened awareness: "Contemplative spiritual practices have helped me to live my life more fully, to be aware of my unconscious patterns, to live more in the reality of the present moment, to have more freedom in relating to myself, others, God."

In summary, wording mattered for participants to articulate how and when they were in a heightened sense of consciousness or awareness. In addition, participants achieve heightened states of awareness using contemplative spiritual practices.

### *Enhanced Self-Awareness*

Heightened awareness also includes self-awareness. According to most of the participant input, greater self-awareness occurs through physical, emotional, and intellectual responses when spiritually practicing in a contemplative way. Most participants believe enhanced self-awareness results in more productive professional experiences, thoughtful self-care, and comfort with the unknown. A survey participant initiated this subtheme with the following:

Contemplative practices have helped me get in touch with my inner child, release old traumas, and envision myself in close, personal relationship with God. It has taught me to notice my triggers and pause when they come up and make a conscious decision on how I react to that trigger. By doing this work, it has also significantly reduced my triggers or eliminated them altogether.

Noticing physical responses to enhance self-awareness can be achieved through physical and spiritual practices in a contemplative way (Appendix D). A labyrinth is a physical, spiritual practice used by 57% of all participants. Two interviewed participants shared that a labyrinth is “a helpful space in solving problems, or working through discernment using a physical form of moving into the center of something and shedding those layers as you walk around the outside and focusing on the center.” 93% of the participants shared that nature walks are a spiritual practice.

Another way of building SQ and self-awareness is noticing emotional responses. As participants used contemplative spiritual practices to enhance self-awareness, it became a safe space to explore various feelings, reactions, and approaches. A survey participant shared how these practices provided them with “a calmer sense of moving throughout my day. I feel a

stronger link to the divine source in my life. I have a more accepting attitude toward what I encounter in my daily life and interactions.” In addition, an interviewed participant shared how:

Through some of the practices, just getting to know myself and spending time with myself in meditation, getting to know what brings me joy and when I'm at my best, has been helpful in creating a capacity or an ability to stay close to those beliefs and values.

In addition, self-awareness can develop through attention to thoughts and ideas, and an intellectual response can occur. Some participants experienced this as noted: “seeking to find that awareness and think through all of the consequences or understand why there's a certain conclusion that exists critically and to find that out for myself if possible.”

Again, some participants shared how enhanced self-awareness enabled more productive professional experiences. A survey participant shared, “I think they make me a more rounded professional, able to listen more readily, thoughtful in practice and strategy, and more aware of what is going on around me.” Another furthered this thought:

Contemplative spiritual practices affect me professionally in feeling grounded and a sense of calm. I feel a stronger confidence in my work and interactions with others. They guide me to stay solid in my values for high standards, ethics, and integrity as I interact with others, confident that the Sacred is always present and at work.

Finally, a survey participant reported: “Contemplative practice allows me to see my professional experiences in a larger context and not be defined by them.”

Next, many participants shared how enhanced self-awareness enabled them to care for themselves. Caring for themselves included “pacing, prioritization, and understanding rest,” according to a survey response. Another participant shared, “Being intentional about taking care of myself, because in loving somebody or letting love drive my going forward - it could turn

from a consolation or something that's positive into a desolation if I'm not taking care of myself." Building enhanced self-awareness in caring for themselves, participants also referred to feeling grounded or rooted when using contemplative spiritual practices because they created a place to build from or go back to depending on the situation as shared:

I see contemplative practices, and even my daily practices are the roots. If you could imagine your body underneath your feet, your feet have the roots that go into the earth and that connect you to the life-giving force. When I do those practices, those contemplative practices, it's like the water of a plant; it gives you life, the breath of life literally.

Finally, half of the interviewed participants shared how SQ enabled greater self-awareness by recognizing what is not known. Through contemplative spiritual practices, these participants became comfortable with the unknown. One shared, "My spiritual intelligence is constantly growing, and I'm constantly learning, so as I am more informed, the less I know." Furthermore, another shared, "The assumption that I don't know everything is a core assumption of mine; those practices that I have, especially everything to do with my leadership being relational, is a natural check against that." Two interview participants input concluded this subtheme as "part of spirituality is the self-actualization piece."

In summary, contemplative spiritual practices enabled spiritual intelligence and enhanced self-awareness for leaders. As noted by a survey response representing many participants. the practices "Provide affirmation, courage, and clarity for myself and, by extension, the leadership I provide for my team." An interviewed participant shared how the practices and obtaining spiritual intelligence enabled them to navigate different leadership situations:

Spiritual intelligence takes practice. I must practice it on my own. I must find practices that work for me so that I can exercise those spiritual muscles or that spiritual memory. Otherwise, I'm never going to be able to do it when I'm during a leadership situation.

Most participants affirmed that leaders could develop a foundation of beliefs, values, and perspectives while recognizing that they may evolve or change through the safe space of contemplative spiritual practices. In addition, these practices enabled space to create groundedness or rootedness, anchoring leaders as they explore knowing less and what that means for their leadership. One interviewed participant summarized how contemplative spiritual practices helped to provide "a pretty rooted and good grasp so that I can recognize when I might be moving off of that or moving away from it. Developing a sensitivity to that." A survey participant shared how contemplative spiritual practices enabled their leadership as:

The ability to listen deeply to myself and others has had a tremendous impact on my ability to lead individuals and my entire team. It has made it easier to discern the difference between when someone comes to me with a problem and needs a simple, quick answer versus being listened to and guided to come up with the solution themselves. Working on triggers and understanding where ego is coming up has helped me to lessen the desire to be in competition with others and to raise the value of collaboration and working together towards a common goal.

### **Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable Capacity to Help Others**

Participant input also showed their capacity to be with others. I identified two subthemes in participant input: *A sense of Responsibility to Walk with Others* and *Spiritual Intelligence to See Others*.

*Sense of Responsibility to Walk with Others*

Seven of the eight interview participants' responses shared how contemplative spiritual practices enabled them to understand the need to be present to others. One participant shared how practices "help to center me and remind me of the world beyond myself." Another responded that practices "help me to develop me in creative ways to meet the needs of the people I serve or encounter." Finally, one responded, "I sense a spiritual presence that cares about me (and all of creation), and that loves me unconditionally. Through this, I am encouraged to love others in this way, despite my human failings."

Many interviewed participants furthered this thought: "For all of us to thrive, we must help others, not just ourselves." Moreover, "Spiritual intelligence is a connection with spirit with other, with divine, with God. And my goal, for lack of a better word, to bring people along the path of deeper connection with God. I will always seek that first." Finally, "It's motivating because my value is what motivates me to help others, to do for others because I feel like that is what we're called to do in this world." A survey response shared, "I feel more able to engage with the world around me with an attitude of love and gratitude." One interview participant shared those contemplative spiritual practices enabled them to:

Get me beyond the normal to get to the needs of others. A grandmother or mother in Syria or Turkey, someone who is like myself, so it helps to get me beyond me is how I get to these levels of consciousness that, you know, open up to the needs, the social needs of people around the world around the community.

*Spiritual Intelligence to See Others*

Most interview participants also connected spiritual intelligence to seeing others. Examples of these connections included: "Spiritual intelligence says what's best for the group, or

what's best for the common good, what is going to meet the needs of the most people.”

Furthermore, “I don't know if I would walk the walk as much as I do without the development of that spiritual intelligence.” Another interview participant shared: “When I'm deciding how that's going to affect other people and not just myself, it's very second nature to me to think that way, and it feels very innate. Moreover, that is connected to spiritual intelligence.”

Most participants also shared how spiritual intelligence enabled them to see others as they truly are, rather than who they may try to be as one participant conveyed: “I think it's helpful for understanding and appreciating what people bring to the table intrinsically and who they are and seeking that out in people. And then also just inviting people to explore who they are as well.” Another added: “Yes. My spiritual intelligence helps me see the gifts and strengths in others to help affirm them in other people.” Furthermore, “I really do believe that my spiritual intelligence has helped me to try to see people as how they were actually created, not how they're supposed to be.”

In summary, contemplative spiritual practices enable most participants to see others, walk with and care for others. This finding concludes: “The spirituality piece for me is helping to channel something through me to help somebody in some way.”

### **Access to a Spiritual Community Enables Spiritual Intelligence**

As noted previously, all participants are past or current students of contemplative spiritual practices. Part of the educational program is to meet with a spiritual director monthly or whatever frequency is determined between the student and the spiritual director. So, all participants have or have had experience with a spiritual director. In my own experience as a student of contemplative practices, the classroom can become a spiritual community for students. I wanted to learn how participants built or enhanced spiritual intelligence in a community. As

this study focused on individuals, there were no questions regarding the community; however, the reference to a spiritual community was abundant enough to note it as a critical theme in the interview participants' journey of developing spiritual intelligence. An example of this includes: "You need a trusting community, you need tools, you need a lot of self-awareness. I think there's places that we just can't get to on our own. So, I think there's spiritual intelligence even in that." Three subthemes identified in support of this crucial theme include *Spiritual Director*, *Spiritual Community*, and *Flexible Faith Community*.

### ***Spiritual Director***

Spiritual Directors are students of contemplative spiritual practices who have completed their study of spiritual direction and achieved the Spiritual Direction Certification. As the spiritual direction is not the focal point of this study, interviewed participants' responses show how vital this role is for their spiritual intelligence development without prompting interview questions. Participants noted how much they appreciated being with a spiritual director, how much they appreciated being a spiritual director themselves, or how much they appreciated both, represented by the following statement:

A big motto for me is to help others to see themselves in a way that helps them to be stronger themselves. And I think that's why I got drawn to spiritual direction sometimes; when people can sit and think about how spiritual experiences can influence their lives, it is a sacred space. I think that's how I came to study spiritual direction and just how that informs my life even more, being able to sit and contemplate those things.

Half of the interview participants shared how vital their spiritual directors are to work through something and sometimes need support to "help me hear, help me listen for the voice of the divine, so I use my spiritual director." They also shared how important it was for them to



develop clarity of situations with their spiritual director: “I come to a point where I know that it's needed if I'm looking for it, talking to my spiritual director about it.”

### *Spiritual Community*

In addition to spiritual directors, most interview participants noted other members of their community who may provide a spiritual space to explore questions and discernment to enhance spiritual intelligence. One participant noted: “I have a spiritual resource in a very dear friend who has understood me and understands me deeply for almost my whole life.” Other resources include: “talking to elders” in working through challenges or making decisions. Also shared was the importance of spiritual community through “I'm looking to mentors to help me see it from a godly perspective.” A final example stated:

More so, a development of various practices, and I think that has been the integral part for me in seeking to transcend, is working with people who have a higher level of spiritual maturity or education and exploring with them what practices have been helpful for them.

### *Flexible Faith Community*

A final spiritual community identified by most interviewed participants was the importance of their faith or religious community. One of the interview participants emphasized how their faith community contributed: “I use my tradition; I feel very strongly about this. I go to church every Sunday, and I love my church.” However, this participant comfortably explored other religious traditions to deepen and broaden their spiritual intelligence: “That's been a huge resource for me. Huge. I can't overstate it enough.” Another shared a similar experience of exploring multiple religious traditions while remaining with their faith community:

Living in a tribal community, it sort of permeates every aspect of the things that we do.

As I got to be a young adult, I became more interested in other religious experiences, and so I would seek out other people or other experiences to reflect on me and build upon my own spiritual experience.

A third interview participant reported leaning into religious beliefs: “My spiritual intelligence comes into play because the more I am connected to God, the more I think God is encouraging us.” Many interview participants used scripture and their faith traditions for spiritual guidance through difficulties and discernment.

In summary, a spiritual community is critical for leaders to develop their spiritual intelligence. These can be communities of faith but may also be communities they live in or are associated with through other means. An important aspect of this finding is that the community is accepting when leaders challenge or explore beliefs to ask questions about their faith traditions.

### **Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable Leaders to Address Complex Issues**

A final theme through input from most interview participants was the importance of contemplative spiritual practices in navigating complex issues like church crises, pandemics, recessions, patriarchy, racism, and unjust systems. One spoke passionately about this: “As more realizations come about the patriarchal and racist systems that are in our church as well as in every other organized thing in our world. We have to be thinking critically about those assumptions and really challenging them.” Another shared: “It has been very hard for me, and so I’m not always looking at the bright side of things because I just feel like life has been a bit compounded.” Another shared when trying to move change: “So that’s a scary thing to approach the powers that be about a tradition, or a law, or whatever it might be, that’s unjust or needs to be looked at even though it’s been in place a long time.”

Nevertheless, there is more positiveness here. Both survey and interview participants shared how contemplative spiritual practices supported them through moving change and addressing complex issues, creating three subthemes that emerged in the study: *How Contemplative Spiritual Practices Can Help*, *Personal Meaning Production*, and *Hope*.

### ***How Contemplative Spiritual Practices Can Help***

A survey participant shared how their practices help them navigate challenging situations: “My spiritual practice gently reminds me to cultivate what I have gained from my practice and to use these gifts when I engage with other people, especially when I am triggered by actions and words that I find offensive.” Another survey participant shared:

They have given me a calmer and more approachable demeanor. I now wonder how God is active in moments of tension and stress which then gives me pause in my reactions in those times. They have also given me a new perspective on happenings. Meaning that they are not necessarily "good" or "bad" but simply are, and my call is to respond to them from a place that is anchored in the Divine. All of this is a work in progress.

A final survey participant shared how contemplative spiritual practices make them: “More tolerant of difficult situations. More accepting of challenging individuals. Able to better regulate my emotions. Sleep better. More energy, grateful, and hopeful. Able to recognize and leave toxic work environments. Persevere. Creativity increases. More willing to say yes.”

Most participants shared how contemplative spiritual practices address stress, provide clarity, enable awareness, create peace, bring joy, and inspire the ability to work in the world. Interview participants shared: “We can't do anything unless we're coming from a place of deep spiritual awareness and practices.” And:

I feel like that is something I use when things get tricky in work or in life—just taking a step back, trying to acknowledge and develop awareness around the situation and ask the spirit or the divine, even the soul, the questions of what is important to hold and what is going to be critical for moving forward, making a decision, and solving a problem.

### ***Personal Meaning Production (PMP)***

The SISRI-24 has five questions to measure PMP. Twenty-three of the 30 participants (78%) responded with 4-Completely true for me or 3-Very True for Me to PMP-related questions. Questions include: “I am able to define a purpose or reason for my life.” and “I am able to make decisions according to my purpose in life.” Most participants had confidence in their ability to make meaning. This subtheme suggests meaningful interpretations of life situations, as noted by this example:

Seeing a bird outside of my house. It's easy to just notice it and not have it impact anything, but I think if I'm taking the opportunity that's presented to me, I can mark and name that space as something beautiful that I get to witness. That is a miraculous form of existence of life and beauty that I get to partake in. So, I think there's an opportunity, with almost everything that we experience throughout the day, to notice that.

Another example included: “Through the process of naming and recognition of the beauty or the nuance of everyday experiences may be a form of existentialism in the way of trying to understand what has brought about something that I'm experiencing or seeing.”

### ***Hope***

Though most interview participants shared how challenging their lives and the world are, hope remained. An example shared: “In the face of everything, especially now, with climate change and social and racial things being revealed that have been hidden for a long time, it's easy

to feel overwhelmed. And so, the spirituality is really the source of hope.” Another shared: “My spiritual intelligence gives me courage when I allow it to say, “speak truth to power.” Another example of shared hope:

As a biracial woman, it is very easy to have feelings of despair, hopelessness, anger, and sadness. My spirituality, or my spiritual intelligence, helps to inform my understanding that despite all those things, there is still oneness, there is still healing, and there is still hope. And there is still much to learn. Instead of staying in that one place and feeling constricted and closed, spirituality helped me to expand that container for other ways of looking at it. And so that is how my spiritual intelligence informs me in situations like that.

In summary, another interview participant provided a hopeful comment:

I think for me, that is developed hope and a belief that you know there is good and there's a reason for us to be optimistic in a world that gets more airtime for negativity than positivity. Spiritual intelligence just helps me be more even-keeled in that space. It causes me to search for truth.

Concluding the findings of this research, a survey participant concisely shared what they most experienced through contemplative spiritual practices: “I'm a better listener, a more patient discerner, a more confident decider, and more into shared leadership and collaboration, even when I'm the lead.” This statement captures the essence of transformational leadership theory. A final comment from a participant represented most of the interview responses and aligned with my own passion for this research: “Because of my own journey and what spiritual intelligence and contemplative practices have done for me, I want to help others to at least be introduced to them and then they can determine if this is something for them.”

### Discussion

This study aimed to determine whether and how contemplative spiritual practices enable spiritual intelligence. In addition, this research demonstrated leaders' need for spiritual intelligence to build their capacity as transformational leaders to be able to address complex issues. Finally, this research applied two spiritual intelligence models and the transformational leadership theory to understand further how this intelligence can support leaders today as they face some of the most complex issues ever known.

Five key themes surfaced as findings from participant input through two data collection methods: survey and interviews. The first theme identified is *Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable Capacity to See More Deeply and Broadly*, supported by four subthemes. Research participants identified a second theme: *Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable Spiritual Intelligence for Leaders*. These first two key findings addressed the first half of the research question. The third theme identified by participants is *Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable Capacity to Help Others*, supported by two subthemes. This was an unanticipated finding, yet it supported the research focus on leadership and aligned well with the transformational leadership approach. Participant input gathered from surveys and interviews uncovered two more key themes: *Access to a Spiritual Community Enables Spiritual Intelligence*, and *Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable Leaders to Address Complex Issues*. Three subthemes support each. The last finding addresses the last part of the research question.

The themes identified by the research participants demonstrated the effectiveness of contemplative spiritual practices. The participants described their ability to develop capacity and spiritual intelligence through the practices, paving a path for leaders to consider when faced with a VUCA world. Referring to Benner (2012) on the clarity of a contemplative state and the

openness to transform, this remains a key ingredient to spiritual practices. Participants note contemplative spiritual practices when they share the importance of being in silence, adjusting perspective, or managing reactions while working in challenging situations. The opportunity remains for how these findings enable transformational leadership. Represented below, I apply the five findings to the four transformational leadership theory dimensions.

As noted in the Theoretical Framework, the four dimensions of the transformational leadership style include *Intellectual Stimulation*, *Idealized Influence*, *Individualized Consideration*, and *Inspirational Motivation*. These dimensions intersect with the key themes identified by participants as described below.

### **Intellectual Stimulation**

Participants identified the first theme as *Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable the Capacity to See More Deeply and Broadly*. This aligns with Bass's (1985) intellectual stimulation leadership dimension recognizing our need to be alone and think things through. According to Northouse (2019), this time alone can solve a problem or adjust beliefs. It can also motivate leaders and followers to challenge leadership or the organization, which transformational leadership theory encourages. Finally, using spiritual resources alone aligns with Emmons' (2000) characteristic of spiritual intelligence.

Capacity is a way to hold our understanding while shifting that understanding while using a contemplative spiritual practice. Also, capacity enables us to hold an understanding of others, our environment, or a divine presence (Lambert, 2009; Vaughan, 2002). Moreover, this capacity can be a result of existential thinking, as King (2008) states:

We can further postulate that this capacity would serve as a valuable coping method when faced with a stressor or crisis (existential, spiritual, or otherwise) due to its anxiety-

reducing effects. The related relaxation would also clear one's mind and focus one's thoughts, allowing for efficient problem-solving, decision-making, and reasoning.” (p. 92)

In my research, most participants discussed how contemplative spiritual practices helped get them into a place of contemplation, either to think more deeply or identify an unexpected outcome.

### **Idealized Influence**

The second theme identified from the input of research participants was that *Contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable Spiritual Intelligence for Leaders*. This theme aligns with Bass's (1985) idealized influence leadership dimension because it considers going beyond self-interest for the good of the group. Thinking more broadly than oneself with the understanding or awareness of the importance of our relationships is part of the definition of spiritual intelligence, as described by Vaughan (2002). This intelligence enabled participants to go beyond self-interest and consider the moral and ethical consequences of decision-making, providing a practical example of this leadership dimension.

### **Individualized Consideration**

Individualized consideration is the third characteristic of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985). It connects with two of the five key themes that participants identified in this study. They are: *Contemplative Spiritual Practices that Enable the Capacity to Help Others*, and *Access to a Spiritual Community Enables Spiritual Intelligence*. Bass (1985) defines this leadership dimension as the ability to help others develop their strengths, create a supportive climate for teams and individuals, and motivate others (and themselves) to engage in personal growth.



*The third key theme is that contemplative Spiritual Practices Enable the Capacity to Help Others.* This was an unanticipated finding, yet it rounds out the understanding of how beneficial contemplative spiritual practices are for leaders. Most interview participants shared how their contemplative spiritual practices enabled them to support others by understanding themselves first. Once achieved, participants shared how they felt more available to help others. This capacity to see or help others enables leaders to share the leadership process, creating greater leadership capacity (Lambert, 2009).

This research's fourth finding connects to Bass's (1985) individualized consideration is *Access to a Spiritual Community Enables Spiritual Intelligence.* Participants shared meaningful interactions with friends, mentors, spiritual directors, and communities of trust to enable their spiritual intelligence. This connects with the supportive climate Bass (1985) expects in transformational leadership and creates a sacred space for personal growth and transformation.

### **Inspirational Motivation**

This final dimension for transformational leadership aligns well with the fifth theme research participants identified: Contemplative *Spiritual Practices Enable Leaders to Address Complex Issues.* The insights provided by the participants show how leaders can remain inspiring, influential, and motivating in times of complexity. Bass (1985) was not aware of the challenges to come 40 years later, but his focus on the importance of leadership to motivate others remains critical considering our VUCA world.

Hacker and Washington (2017) say leaders who can inspire hope are in high demand. The ability to access and share hope as a leader is apparent through the findings of this research. Hope enables optimism about the future, a key component of this transformational leadership

dimension. Research participants noted that their contemplative spiritual practices and spiritual intelligence enable them to be hopeful regardless of the VUCA world.

### **Limitations**

The project limitations create future opportunities for additional research, and I remain excited to carry these opportunities forward. Limitations include the scope and theoretical frameworks.

The scope of this research was significant for a thesis project yet laid the groundwork for several future research opportunities. There remains an opportunity to conduct quantitative methods further to explore the participants' responses through statistical analysis. Another opportunity is creating a control group of participants not educated in contemplative practices, as further study may reveal different approaches to supporting leaders today. Moreover, finally, including follower feedback from the leaders involved in this study is another opportunity for future research. Any of these opportunities can balance the three sets of self-assessment questions used in this study.

The use of dated theoretical frameworks is another limitation. However, this research addresses it by using multiple models to substantiate findings, as all the authors of these models are white men. This research lays a path for exploration by women and BIPOC individuals, who will alter, rectify, adjust, and create new theories.

Concluding the limitations, this study created a foundation for future research. I look forward to future opportunities to explore and extend this research further.

At the end of this discussion, I want to underline the essence of transformational leadership theory: how leaders go beyond the expected. This is critical for organizations facing more complex issues than ever (Hacker & Washington, 2017; Northouse, 2019). In addition, the

five themes identified through this research and aligned with the literature are relevant to transformational leadership development. Considering our VUCA world, contemplative spiritual practices, spiritual intelligence, and transformational leadership capacity can create leaders who can be critically essential to navigating the coming years. As Hacker and Washington (2017) determined through their research about the importance of spiritual intelligence, “This is no longer just a leadership challenge (what good leadership looks like); it is a development challenge (the process of how to grow “bigger” minds)” (p. 22).

### **Summary and Recommendations**

This research sought to learn how leaders use contemplative spiritual practices to enable spiritual intelligence while building transformational leadership capacity. Findings from this study shine a light on how spiritual intelligence can grow individually and, in a community, creating a collaborative opportunity for building leadership to understand and navigate complex issues.

Recommendations because of this study include first expanding the curriculum at St. Catherine University and other universities with graduate programs in business administration and organizational leadership. Moreover, furthering this research by creating a control group, applying feminist ethics or other diverse leadership theories, and including the community surrounding the leaders who participated.

The first recommendation addresses the gaps in institutions like St. Catherine University graduate programs. Considering the development and enablement of leaders, these institutions can utilize SQ and contemplative curricula to further the educational experience for graduate students. When considering SQ through my research and learning of the importance of this intelligence and how easily accessible it is to all leaders (we all have a spirit, inner being, or

thoughts about the meaning of life), there remains an opportunity for institutions like St. Catherine University to incorporate contemplative spiritual practices education into the graduate leadership curriculum. Moreover, SQ should be the umbrella curriculum of the graduate programs rather than an add-on or side course considered applicable only to theology students.

The second recommendation addresses the opportunities of this research. As this research creates a grounded theory of how to achieve SQ and transformational leadership capacity and the relevance of each, there remains an opportunity to lean into feminist ethics and other BIPOC-related theories to create greater depth. As the opportunity fits squarely into the vision and mission of St. Catherine University, my recommendation is for this institution or institution to fund this recommended research. As this research developed critical ground in supporting and enabling leaders, I look forward to implementing these recommendations with St. Catherine University or institutions soon.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I will briefly summarize the methodology used in this research, the key research findings about the research question, share the value and contribution to the leadership field, acknowledge the study's limitations, and propose future research opportunities. I will close by suggesting the following steps to further this study.

This study aimed to learn how contemplative spiritual practices enable spiritual intelligence while building transformational leadership capacity to help organizations address complex issues. The results yielded five findings. The first finding is that practicing spirituality in a contemplative way enables spiritual intelligence through enhanced critical thinking, the ability to be virtuous, enabling the ability to transcend environments, and supporting the ability

to reframe perspective. Research participant input points to how mindful capacity, or the ability to make room for different perspectives, expands while using contemplative spiritual practices.

The second finding is that applying spiritual practices contemplatively and recognizing spiritual intelligence supports leaders to lead more thoughtfully. Research participants show that building awareness, including transcendental, heightened states, and self, impacts leaders' ability to support their teams in more collaborative approaches.

The third finding is that using spiritual practices in a contemplative way builds leadership capacity to support others. This is an unanticipated finding. Research participants input shared a belief in their responsibility to be present to others and understand others more deeply. Results also indicate that through spiritual intelligence, leaders can see the potential in their teams and differentiate between what is good for themselves and the good of the group. study

The fourth finding is how participants developed spiritual intelligence through participating in a trusted community. For research participants, communities they seek include faith communities, friends, or spiritual directors, or sometimes all of the above. In addition, this is different from using contemplative spiritual practices to develop spiritual intelligence and enhance this study.

The fifth and final finding is how the results indicate that contemplative spiritual practices enable leaders to address complex issues. Research participants share that when they use spiritual practices contemplatively, they can problem-solve, develop greater awareness, enhance their capacity to understand, and adjust to other perspectives or their own. In addition, findings indicate hope and optimism for the future exist through contemplative spiritual practices.

The literature in this field typically focuses on spiritual intelligence and its association with transformational leadership theory through similar instruments to those used in this study. In addition, existing literature defines spiritual practices and how to practice them contemplatively. Limited research exists about enabling spiritual intelligence by applying contemplative spiritual practices. And again, limited research exists about how to build leadership capacity, individually and collectively, to address complex issues. The research in all areas of this study is disparate, and while some research pulls pieces together, none pulls all four areas together as this research does.

Therefore, this study opens possibilities for future research and immediate action. This study contributes to the leadership field by supporting the relevancy and accessibility of spiritual intelligence for leaders. In addition, this study contributes to leadership and other fields by showing how to achieve spiritual intelligence using spiritual practices in a contemplative application. This study also expands transformational leadership theory through current applicability and relevancy. Finally, this study unfolds the need for and the ability to develop a greater mindful capacity for leaders to navigate or address complex issues.

The limitations of this research are in the preceding section. As most limitations are related to time constraints, they give way to exciting opportunities for further study, and I want to dedicate myself to that further study. I find all of this not only of extraordinary importance but also of extraordinary personal interest and commitment. I look forward to what is ahead.

Moving forward, leaders can take immediate action to further develop their spiritual intelligence, first, by learning contemplative spiritual practices. Education is available through various religious institutions or spiritual centers. Second, leaders can act by applying contemplative spiritual practices if they have received prior education or understanding. A third

action leaders can act by research spiritual centers in their area that provide spiritual direction.

Finally, leaders can act with all three. This study suggests that leaders would do well to move in this direction.

Then, this study extends the relevance of spiritual intelligence for leaders. It also points to how to enable spiritual intelligence using spiritual practices in a contemplative application. In addition, it expands the transformational leadership theory by developing the understanding of a greater capacity available for leaders. Finally, this study provides hope for leaders navigating today's complex issues.

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## Appendix A

### ST CATHERINE UNIVERSITY

#### Informed Consent for a Research Study

#### Survey Study Title: Enabling Spiritual Intelligence

You are invited to participate in a research study. This study is called Enabling Spiritual Intelligence. Sue Fairchild is doing the study, a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership graduate student at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, MN. The faculty advisor for this study is Bill McDonough, Professor of and Coordinator for Graduate Theology at St. Catherine University. Below, you will find answers to the most commonly asked questions about participating in a research study. Please read this entire document and ask questions you have before you agree to be in the study.

**Why are the researchers doing this study?** This study aims to understand how contemplative spiritual practices effect Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) and transformational leadership, as these are critically necessary due to the complexity of our issues today. This study is important because SQ is not well known as a leadership trait or is often affiliated with a religion, discounting its potential use in our everyday lives. Approximately 40 - 70 people are expected to participate in this research.

**Why have I been asked to be in this study?** You are asked to participate in this study because you have taken spiritual practice courses and hold an informal or formal leadership role.

**If I decide to participate, what will I be asked to do?** If you meet the criteria and agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey that will take around 30 minutes requesting the following:

- Provide demographics and characteristics.
- Complete the SISRI-24, Spiritual Intelligence Self-Assessment.
- Share the use of contemplative spiritual practices and their impact.

**What if I decide I don't want to be in this study?** Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you do not want to participate in this study, please push the "No" radio button below. If you decide to participate in this study, but later change your mind and want to withdraw, notify me, and you will be removed immediately. You may withdraw until January 31, 2023, after which withdrawal will no longer be possible. Your decision to participate will have no negative or positive impact on your relationship with St. Catherine University or any of the students or faculty involved in the research.

**What risks (dangers or harms) do me if I am in this study?** If any risk does exist with this study, it is minimal. All information gathered will use pseudonyms to maintain participant confidentiality when storing responses. Data will be stored in St. Kate's google drive, with the code key stored separately. If the survey triggers curiosity or concerns about SQ, resources are provided at the bottom of the page for spiritual direction or conversation.

**What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study?** Possible benefits of participation in this study may enable greater self-awareness and a better understanding of spiritual

intelligence.

**Will I receive any compensation for participating in this study?** None.

**What will you do with the information you get from me, and how will you protect my privacy?** The information you provide in this study will be coded and named with a pseudonym to ensure privacy. The information you share will be combined with other survey participants to understand correlations between SQ, spiritual contemplative practices, and transformational leadership. The researcher will keep the research results in St. Catherine's google drive with the pseudonym table stored separately. Only the researcher and their advisor will have access to the records while they work on this project. The researcher will finish analyzing the data by May 31, 2023, and then destroy all original reports and identifying information that can be linked to you. The combined information will be presented as a part of my research and possibly published. Any information you provide will be kept confidential, which means that you will not be identified or identifiable in any written reports or publications. If it becomes useful to disclose any of your information, the researcher will seek your permission and tell you the persons or agencies to whom the information will be furnished, the nature of the information to be furnished, and the purpose of the disclosure; you will have the right to grant or deny permission for this to happen. If you do not grant permission, the information will remain confidential and will not be released.

**Could my information be used for future research?** Yes, your data may be used for additional research. All collected data will be de-identified and may be used for future research or given to another investigator for future research without gaining additional informed consent.

**Are there possible changes to the study once it gets started?** If, during this research study, the researcher learns about new findings that might influence your willingness to continue participating in the study, they will inform you of these findings.



**How can I get more information?** If you have any questions, you can ask them before you sign this form by contacting one of the individuals listed below.

- Feel free to contact the researcher by Phone number: 612-743-7810 and/or by Email address: slfairchild076@stkate.edu

- If you have any additional questions later and would like to talk to the faculty advisor, please contact Bill McDonough at Phone number: 651-690-6072 and/or Email address: wcmcdonough@stkate.edu

- If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at Phone number: (651) 690-7739 and/or Email address: jsschmitt@stkate.edu.

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that your participation in the study is voluntary, meet the research criteria, and know that you may choose to terminate your participation at any time and for any reason.

Yes, I consent to participate in this survey. (Survey will go to the first question)

No, I do not consent to participate in this survey. (Survey will go to “End of Survey”)

End of Block: Intro and Consent

**ST CATHERINE UNIVERSITY**  
Informed Consent for a Research Study  
Survey Study Title: Enabling Spiritual Intelligence

Start of Block: Characteristics / SISRI-24 / Contemplative Spiritual Practices

What is your age?

20 - 29 years old

30 - 39 years old

40 - 49 years old

50 - 59 years old

60 - 69 years old

70+ years old



Most completed education:

- High School
  - Some Post-Secondary
  - Associate Degree
  - Undergraduate Degree
  - Some Graduate Degree
  - Graduate Degree
  - Doctorate Degree
- 

What sex were you assigned at birth on your original birth certificate?

- Male
  - Female
  - Intersex
  - I use a different term.
-

With which do you identify your gender?

- Cisgender (a person whose gender aligns with their birth sex)
  - Transgender (a person whose gender identity does not align with what is typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth)
  - I use a different term.
- 

How do you currently describe your gender?

- Man
  - Non-binary
  - Woman
  - I use a different term
-

How do you currently describe your sexuality?

- Asexual
  - Bisexual
  - Gay
  - Heterosexual
  - Lesbian
  - Pansexual
  - Queer
  - Questioning
  - I use a different term
-

Single / Married

- Married
- Divorced
- Separated
- Never married

---

Where do you live (city, state)?

---

---

What is the name of your school or spirituality center where you learned about contemplative spiritual practices & location (school name, city, state)?

---

Share your professional experience in years. Please share how long you've worked in a position(s) you consider contributing to your career development.

- 0 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 11 - 15 years
- 16 - 20 years
- 21 - 25 years
- 26 - 30 years
- 31 - 35 years
- 36 - 40 years
- 41+ years

---

Did you graduate with a four-year degree?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

Share your informal leadership experience in years. Please share if you've worked in a role that did not provide an authoritative title (i.e., supervisor) yet expected leadership behavior. Such roles do not have other positions directly reporting to them.

- None
  - 0 - 5 years
  - 6 - 10 years
  - 11 - 15 years
  - 16 - 20 years
  - 21 - 25 years
  - 26 - 30 years
  - 31 - 35 years
  - 36 - 40 years
  - 41+ years
-



Share your formal leadership experience in years. Please share if you've worked in a role with an authoritative title with other positions directly reporting to the role.

- None
- 0 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 11 - 15 years
- 16 - 20 years
- 21 - 25 years
- 26 - 30 years
- 31 - 35 years
- 36 - 40 years
- 41+ years

---

Page Break	
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I have often questioned or pondered the nature of reality.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
- 

I recognize aspects of myself that are deeper than my physical body.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
-

I have spent time contemplating the purpose or reason for my existence.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
- 

I am able to enter higher states of consciousness or awareness.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
-

I am able to deeply contemplate what happens after death.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
- 

It is difficult for me to sense anything other than the physical and material.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
-

My ability to find meaning and purpose in life helps me adapt to stressful situations.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
- 

I can control when I enter higher states of consciousness or awareness.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
-

I have developed my own theories about such things as life, death, reality, and existence.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
- 

I am aware of a deeper connection between myself and other people.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
-

I am able to define a purpose or reason for my life.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
- 

I am able to move freely between levels of consciousness or awareness.

- Not at all true of me
- Not very true of me
- Somewhat true of me
- Very true of me
- Completely true of me

I frequently contemplate the meaning of events in my life.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
- 

I define myself by my deeper, non-physical self.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
-



When I experience a failure, I can still find meaning in it.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
- 

I often see issues and choices more clearly while in higher states of consciousness/awareness.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
-

I have often contemplated the relationship between human beings and the rest of the universe.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
- 

I am highly aware of the nonmaterial aspects of life.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
-

I am able to make decisions according to my purpose in life.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
- 

I recognize qualities in people which are more meaningful than their body, personality, or emotions.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
-

I have deeply contemplated whether or not there is some greater power or force (e.g., god, goddess, divine being, higher energy, etc.)

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
- 

Recognizing the nonmaterial aspects of life helps me feel centered.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
-

I am able to find meaning and purpose in my everyday experiences.

- Not at all true of me
  - Not very true of me
  - Somewhat true of me
  - Very true of me
  - Completely true of me
- 

I have developed my own techniques for entering higher states of consciousness or awareness.

- Not at all true of me
- Not very true of me
- Somewhat true of me
- Very true of me
- Completely true of me

Do you use contemplative spiritual practices?

No

Yes

---

If yes, how many years?

1 - 2 years

3 - 4 years

5 - 6 years

7 - 8 years

9 - 10 years

Over ten years

---

If yes, which practice (select all that apply)?

- Centering Prayer
  - Lectio Divina
  - Chanting
  - The Examen
  - Praying with Icons
  - Nature Walks
  - Noticing our bodies
  - Pilgrimage / Labyrinth
  - Lamenting
  - Gratitude
  - Other
-

If yes, how often?

- Daily
- Multiple times daily
- 2-3 times a week
- Once a week
- Monthly

---

Describe how you feel after practicing a contemplative spiritual practice.

---

---

---

---

---

---

Describe how contemplative spiritual practices affect you personally.

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---

---

---

---



Describe how contemplative spiritual practices affect you professionally.

---

---

---

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---

End of Block: Characteristics / SISRI-24 / Contemplative Spiritual Practices

---

If you are on this page, you've completed the "Enabling Spiritual Intelligence"  
survey  
– Thank You!

There is another research phase of this work.

Please provide your contact information below if you can participate in a 60-minute interview. Up to 10 participants will be chosen and receive a **\$25 Gift Card!**

The researcher (Sue Fairchild) will use your provided contact information to review the consent information, ensure voluntary participation, and schedule a time for a 60-minute interview over Zoom.

Yes, I can participate in Phase 2  
 No, I can not participate in Phase 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

End of Survey.

Thank you for your participation!

## Appendix B

### St. Catherine University - Thesis Research of Sue Fairchild Enabling Spiritual Intelligence Interview Questions

#### Priming Questions:

- 1) What do you do for a living?
- 2) How long have you been in that role?
- 3) How does SQ affect your work life?
- 4) Do you have any questions before we get started with the interview?

#### Emmons (2000), SQ-related questions:

- 1) How do you develop the capacity to transcend the physical and material?
- 2) Describe your experience with heightened states of consciousness.
- 3) How do you sanctify everyday experiences?
- 4) What spiritual resources do you use to solve problems?
- 5) How do you develop the capacity to be virtuous?

#### Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 5X-Short of Transformational Leadership Factors as interpreted by Northouse (2019, p. 191) with related probing questions:

- 1) TL1 - Idealized Influence (Attributes):
  - a. Please rate yourself regarding the following statement: "I go beyond self-interest for the good of the group."
    - i. 0 = Not at all
    - ii. 1 = Once in a while
    - iii. 2 = Sometimes
    - iv. 3 = Fairly Often
    - v. 4 = Frequently if not always
  - b. Describe how or if your spiritual intelligence affects your rating.
  - c. Describe how or if your spiritual intelligence affects your ability to go beyond self-interest.
- 2) TL2 - Idealized Influence (Behaviors):
  - a. Please rate yourself regarding the following statement: "I consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions."
    - i. 0 = Not at all
    - ii. 1 = Once in a while
    - iii. 2 = Sometimes
    - iv. 3 = Fairly Often
    - v. 4 = Frequently if not always
  - b. Describe how or if your spiritual intelligence affects your rating.

- c. Describe how or if your spiritual intelligence affects your ability to consider moral and ethical consequences of decisions.
- 3) TL3 - Inspirational Motivation:
  - a. Please rate yourself regarding the following statement: "I talk optimistically about the future."
    - i. 0 = Not at all
    - ii. 1 = Once in a while
    - iii. 2 = Sometimes
    - iv. 3 = Fairly Often
    - v. 4 = Frequently if not always
  - b. Describe how or if your spiritual intelligence affects your rating.
  - c. Describe how or if your spiritual intelligence affects your ability to talk optimistically about the future.
- 4) TL4 - Intellectual Stimulation:
  - a. Please rate yourself regarding the following statement: "I reexamine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate."
    - i. 0 = Not at all
    - ii. 1 = Once in a while
    - iii. 2 = Sometimes
    - iv. 3 = Fairly Often
    - v. 4 = Frequently, if not always
  - b. Describe how or if your spiritual intelligence affects your rating.
  - c. Describe how or if your spiritual intelligence affects your ability to reexamine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate.
- 5) TL5 - Individualized Consideration:
  - a. Please rate yourself regarding the following statement: "I help others to develop their strengths."
    - i. 0 = Not at all
    - ii. 1 = Once in a while
    - iii. 2 = Sometimes
    - iv. 3 = Fairly Often
    - v. 4 = Frequently if not always
  - b. Describe how or if your spiritual intelligence affects your rating.
  - c. Describe how or if your spiritual intelligence affects your ability to help others to develop their strengths.

If this interview has created curiosity or concerns with your SQ, here are some resources for your consideration: Loyola Spiritual Center / 651-641-0008 / [info@loyolaspiritualitycenter.org](mailto:info@loyolaspiritualitycenter.org)  
Christos Spiritual Center / 651-653-8207 / [www.christoscenter.org](http://www.christoscenter.org)

## Appendix C

### ST CATHERINE UNIVERSITY Informed Consent for a Research Study Survey Study Title: Enabling Spiritual Intelligence

You are invited to participate in a research study. This study is called Enabling Spiritual Intelligence. Sue Fairchild is doing the study, a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership graduate student at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, MN. The faculty advisor for this study is Bill McDonough, Professor of and Coordinator for Graduate Theology at St. Catherine University. Below, you will find answers to the most asked questions about participating in a research study. Please read this entire document and ask questions you have before you agree to be in the study.

#### **Why are the researchers doing this study?**

This study aims to understand how contemplative spiritual practices enable Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) and transformational leadership, as these are critically necessary due to the complexity of our issues today. This study is important because SQ is not well known as a leadership trait or is often affiliated with a religion, discounting its potential use in our everyday lives. Up to 80 people are expected to participate in this research.

#### **Why have I been asked to be in this study?**

You are asked to participate in this study because you have taken spiritual practice courses, have a four-year degree, and hold an informal or formal leadership role in corporate America.

#### **If I decide to participate, what will I be asked to do?**

If you meet the criteria and agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey that will take around 30 minutes requesting the following:

- Provide demographics and characteristics.
- Complete the SISRI-24, Spiritual Intelligence Self-Assessment.
- Share the use of contemplative spiritual practices and their impact.

If you participate in the survey, you will be asked to further your participation through a 60-minute interview over Zoom. If you participate in an interview, you will receive a \$25 gift card. Up to ten participants will be interviewed.

#### **What if I decide I don't want to be in this study?**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you do not want to participate in this study, please feel free to say so, and do not sign this form. If you decide to participate in this study but later change your mind and want to withdraw, notify me, and you will be removed immediately. You may withdraw until February 28, 2023, after which withdrawal will no longer be possible. Your decision to participate will have no negative or positive impact on your relationship with St. Catherine University or any students or faculty involved in the research.

#### **What risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?**

If any risk does exist with this study, it is minimal. All information gathered will use pseudonyms to maintain participant confidentiality when storing responses. Data will be stored in St. Kate's google drive, with the code key stored separately. If the survey triggers curiosity or concerns about SQ, resources are provided at the bottom of the page for spiritual direction or conversation.

**What benefits (good things) may happen if I am in this study?**

Possible benefits of participation in this study may enable greater self-awareness and connection to something larger than yourself.

**Will I receive any compensation for participating in this study?**

- Survey: No compensation for participating in the survey.
- Interview: \$25 gift card for participating in the interview

**What will you do with the information you get from me, and how will you protect my privacy?**

The information you provide in this study will be coded and named with a pseudonym to ensure privacy. The information you share will be combined with other survey participants to understand correlations between SQ, spiritual contemplative practices, and transformational leadership.

The researcher will keep the research results in St. Catherine's google drive with the pseudonym table stored separately. Only the researcher and their advisor will have access to the records while they work on this project. The researcher will finish analyzing the data by May 31, 2023, and then destroy all original reports and identifying information that can be linked to you. The combined information will be presented as a part of my research and possibly published. Any information you provide will be kept confidential, which means that you will not be identified or identifiable in any written reports or publications. If it becomes useful to disclose any of your information, the researcher will seek your permission and tell you the persons or agencies to whom the information will be furnished, the nature of the information to be furnished, and the purpose of the disclosure; you will have the right to grant or deny permission for this to happen. If you do not grant permission, the information will remain confidential and will not be released.

**Could my information be used for future research?**

Yes, your data may be used for additional research. All collected data will be de-identified and may be used for future research or given to another investigator for future research without gaining additional informed consent.

**Are there possible changes to the study once it gets started?**

If, during this research study, the researcher learns about new findings that might influence your willingness to continue participating in the study, they will inform you of these findings

**How can I get more information?**

If you have any questions, you can ask them before you sign this form. You can also feel free to contact the researcher at:

**Phone number:** 612-743-7810 and/or **Email address:** [slfairchild076@stkate.edu](mailto:slfairchild076@stkate.edu)

If you have any additional questions later and would like to talk to the faculty advisor, please contact Bill McDonough at:

**Phone number:** 651-690-6072 and/or **Email address:** [wcmcdonough@stkate.edu](mailto:wcmcdonough@stkate.edu)

If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at:

**Phone number:** (651) 690-7739 and/or **Email address:** [jsschmitt@stkate.edu](mailto:jsschmitt@stkate.edu).

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

**Statement of Consent of the Survey:**

I consent to participate in the study.

My signature indicates that I have read this information, my questions have been answered and I am at least 18 years of age.

---

Signature of Participant

Date

---

Printed Name of Participant

*James J. Davis*

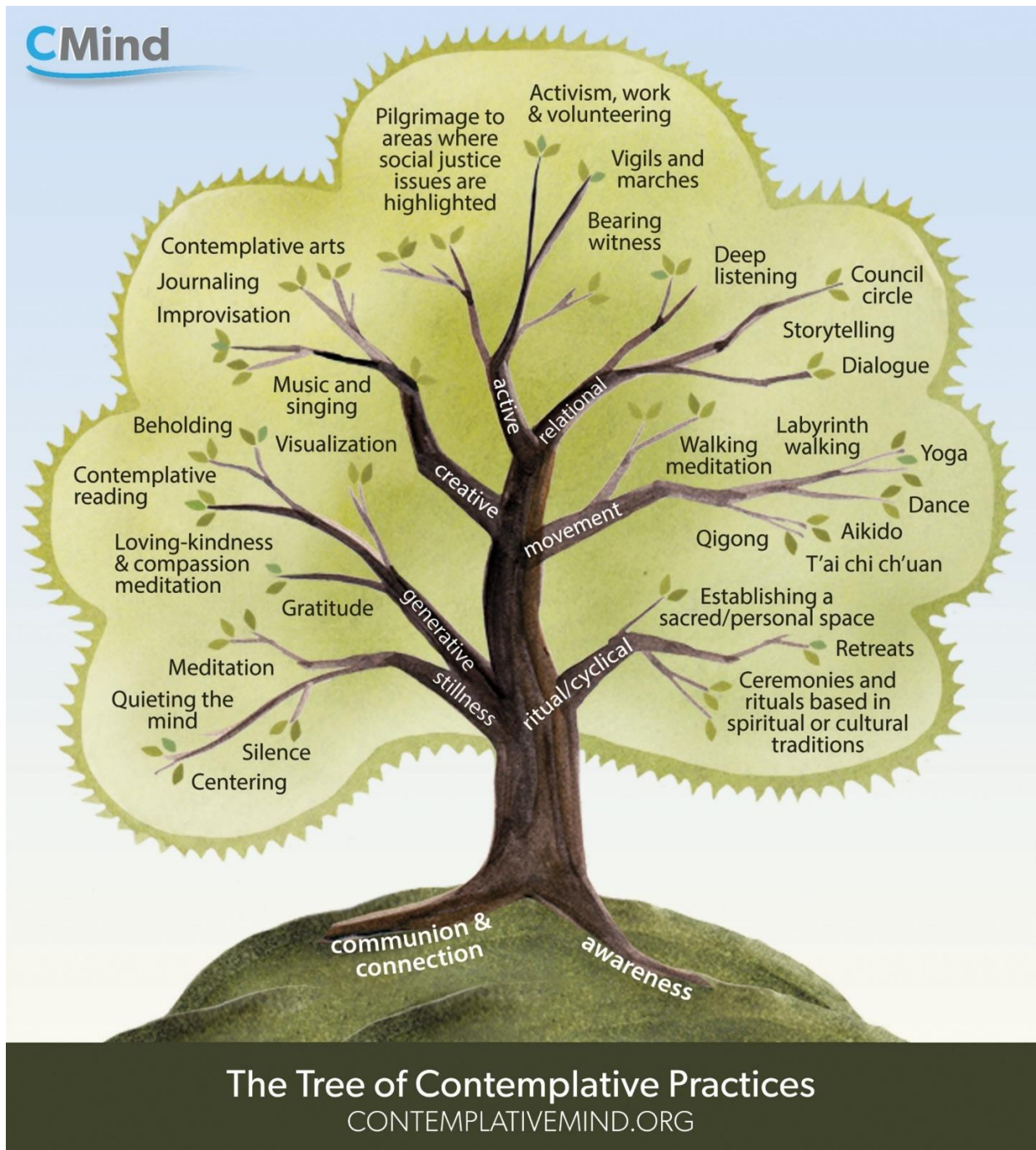
Signature of Researcher

Date

*11/2/22*



Appendix D



(CMind, 2023)

## Appendix E





## CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

---

This study seeks to learn more about Spiritual Intelligence.

In addition to a four-year degree, participants studied contemplative spiritual practices through formal education and hold leadership positions (*formal* [title] or *informal* [no title, but leadership expectations]).

Contemplative Spiritual Practices include Centering Prayer, The Examen, Lectio Divina, Lament, Icons, Chanting, etc., educated through St. Kate's or a spirituality center.

Participants will complete an online survey taking 30 minutes; upon completion can be considered to participate in a 60-minute interview earning a **\$25 gift card** (10 available).

Today's issues are more complex than ever, challenging leaders to be more intelligent. How do your contemplative spiritual practices enable spiritual intelligence?

Please consider participating in the study "Enabling Spiritual Intelligence" to inform those who have yet to experience contemplative spiritual practices.

**[CLICK HERE TO PARTICIPATE](#)**

Eligibility:

- Four-year degree
- Study Contemplative Spiritual Practices thru St. Kate's, another university, or a Spirituality Center
- Have a leadership position (formal or informal)

This research is conducted by Sue Fairchild of St. Catherine's University as part of a thesis study.