



Extracting Intelligence from Spirituality
A New Model of Human Ability

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The Psychological Study of Spirituality

A Very Brief History

- William James (1902) – The Varieties of Religious Experience
- Carl Jung (1930s – 1950s) – integrating spirituality into daily lives
- Abraham Maslow (1964, 1971) – peak experiences, self-actualization
- Humanistic Psychology (1960s)
- Transpersonal Psychology (1970s)

Current State of Affairs

"The prevalence of negative or indifferent attitudes within psychology in general toward religion and spirituality have been reflected in the under-representation of religion and spirituality as research variables in mainstream [psychology]"

(Nasel, 2004, p. 11).

Religiosity vs. Spirituality

- **Religiousness/religiosity:** a set of behaviours (social or private, including rituals), values, and attitudes that are based on (and lie within the boundaries of) previously established religious doctrine and institutionalized organization.

VS.

- **Spirituality:** an unbounded set of personal drives, behaviours, experiences, values, and attitudes which are related to existential understanding, meaning, purpose, and transcendence.

Multiple Intelligences

- In 1983, Howard Gardner proposed the theory of multiple intelligences, suggesting that one construct of intelligence (as measured by the intelligence quotient or IQ) was far too limiting to describe all mental abilities.
- Initially included seven intelligences, ranging from musical to interpersonal and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.
- Many other types of intelligence have been proposed, including emotional, sexual, moral, and spiritual, some with a great deal of support.
- Theories/Models of a spiritual intelligence:
Emmons (2000); Noble (2000/2001); Vaughan (2002); Wolman (2001); Zohar & Marshall (2003); Nasel (2004); Amram (2007)

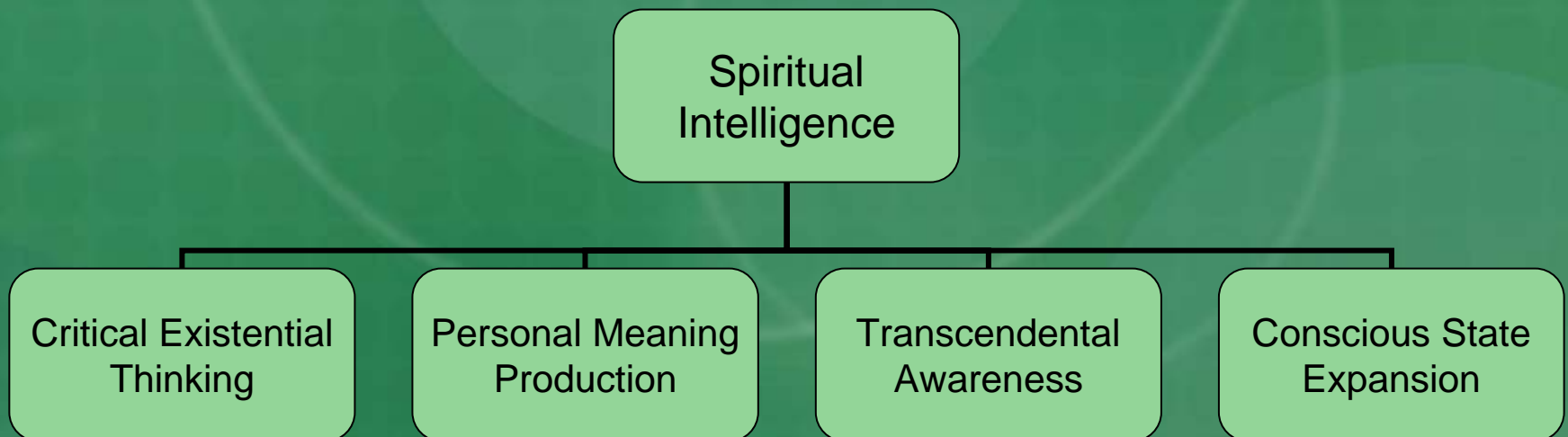
Criteria for an Intelligence

1. include a set of interrelated mental abilities (distinct from behaviours, experiences, phenomenology, etc.) – these should be moderately interrelated.
2. develop over the lifespan.
3. facilitate adaptation and problem-solving in a particular environmental context.
4. allow an individual to reason abstractly and make judgements.
5. demonstrate a biological component or foundation in the brain.

Spiritual Intelligence

A New Definition & Model

- **Spiritual intelligence denotes a set of adaptive mental capacities which are based on nonmaterial and transcendent aspects of reality, specifically those which are related to the nature of one's existence, personal meaning, transcendence, and expanded states of consciousness.**
- When applied, these processes are adaptive in their ability to facilitate unique means of problem-solving, abstract-reasoning, and coping.



I. Critical Existential Thinking

- **The capacity to critically contemplate the nature of existence, reality, the universe, space, time, death, and other existential or metaphysical issues.**
- Other authors (e.g., Gardner, 1993; Halama & Strizenec, 2004; Shearer, 2006c; Tupper, 2002) support the inclusion of an existential intelligence.
- One must actually 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.
- Also involves the capacity to apply this form of thinking to other issues/experiences (i.e., thinking about other issues critically in relation to one's existence).

II. Personal Meaning Production

- The ability to derive personal meaning and purpose from all physical and mental experiences, including the capacity to create and master a life purpose.
- Many authors (e.g., Meddin, 1998; Wong, 1989) have suggested a cognitive component of personal meaning.
- Purpose is simply a form of meaning-making.
- Distinct from previous ability: meaning must be *derived*, not just contemplated.

III. Transcendental Awareness

- The capacity to identify transcendent dimensions of the self (e.g., a transpersonal self), of others, and of the physical world during the normal, waking state of consciousness.
- Research suggests cognitive components of awareness and perception related to transcendence (Hamel et al., 2003).
- Transcendent dimensions include: a transpersonal or transegoic self, a nonmaterial dimension, and perhaps a holistic dimension.

IV. Conscious State Expansion

- **The ability to enter and exit higher/spiritual states of consciousness at one's own discretion (as in deep contemplation, meditation, prayer, etc.).**
- Distinct from the phenomenological experience.
- Higher states include: pure consciousness, cosmic consciousness, unity/unitive consciousness, oneness; also described as mystical.
- Research suggests that some individuals are more skilled at entering these higher states (e.g., Lehmann et al., 2001; Maslow, 1964; Vaitl et al., 2005).
- Research also suggests that cognitive control dominates over physical/bodily control.

Adaptive Applications

- Particularly adaptive in existential / spiritual crises, health problems, dealing with loss, dealing with death, and aging.
- Many other outcome variables (e.g., low depression, life satisfaction).
- *Example: Death Acceptance*
 - CET allows for contemplation of death in the context of one's existence.
 - PMP aids in the deriving of meaning and purpose from the impending event.
 - TA allows a person to find comfort in the perception of "more" to life than just biological and physical processes.
 - CSE provides adaptive means of relaxation and reflection, overcoming distress and discomfort.

Development over the Lifespan

- Many stage theories of spirituality have been proposed.
- Evidence of children who have developed techniques for entering higher states of consciousness.
- Majority of research and theory suggests that spiritual abilities emerge in adolescence (w/ development of abstract reasoning) and early adulthood (during identity formation).
- Existential thinking and personal meaning production likely peak in later adulthood as death approaches.

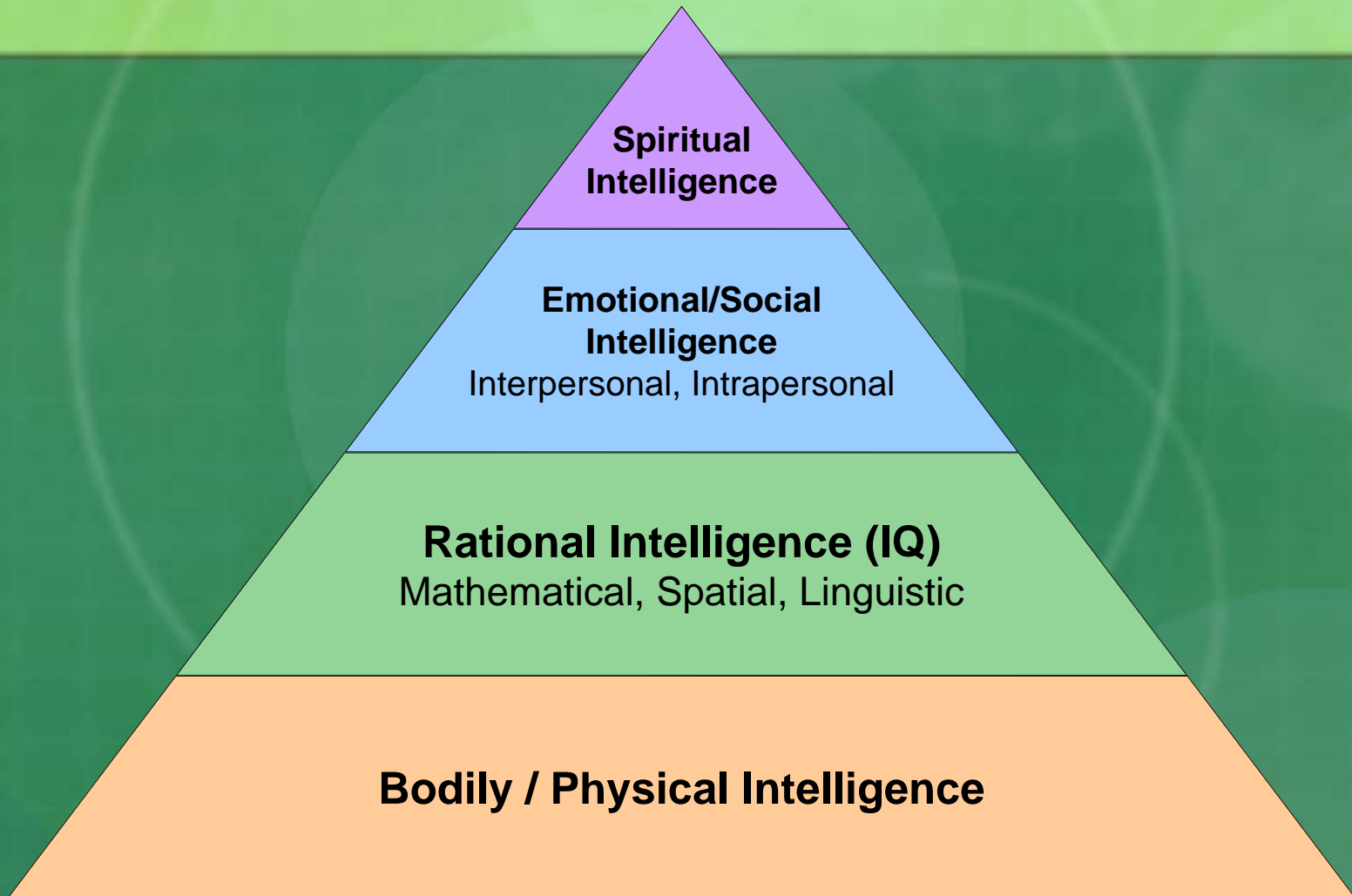
Biological Foundations

- Research is emerging which suggests a spiritual or religious center in the brain (temporal lobes & limbic system).
- Unique electrocortical activity during various meditation techniques.
- No clear investigation of spiritual capacities/abilities as opposed to spiritual experiences.

Where does SI fit?

- Spiritual intelligence is distinct from spiritual experiences/feelings/behaviours.
- These mental abilities can be thought of as *underlying* or *relating to* spirituality.
- It is not the goal of this study to try to fit spiritual intelligence into other theories or models of human intelligence (e.g., Gardner's MI).
- It is simply being suggested that a distinct set of mental abilities related to spirituality exists.

Where does SI fit?



Current Research

- Development and testing of a scale to measure spiritual intelligence: The Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI)
- Study 1 has supported the factor structure of the proposed model of spiritual intelligence.
- Contemplating meaning is distinct from deriving meaning.
- How does the SISRI relate to measures of meaning, mystical experiences, intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity, life satisfaction, and emotions?
- How does spiritual intelligence relate to IQ and emotional intelligence?



Questions?