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Empirical Correlates of the Spiritual Well-Being and
Spiritual Maturity Scales

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ABSTRACT

A study of the empirical correlates of the Spiritual Well—being and Spiritual Maturity Scales was conducted using a religiously heterogeneous sample of 65 adults. Each person completed a biographical questionnaire and took the Spiritual Well—being (SWB), Spiritual Maturity (SM) and Religious Orientation Scales (ROS).

Results indicated that SWB and its subscales, Religious and Existential Well—being (EWE, EWE) were positively correlated with each other and with the I scale on the ROS. SWB, EWE, EWE, and I also were all positively correlated with self reports of importance of religion, frequency of church attendance, frequency and duration of personal devotions, and frequency of family devotions; all but EWE were correlated with religious knowledge.

Validation was provided for both SWB and SM. However, in this sample the high correlations between SWB and SM suggest that they are not necessarily measuring distinct qualities as Ellison hypothesized. Finally, single item measures of importance of religion, frequency of church attendance, and frequency and duration of personal devotions correlate almost as strongly with the religious scales as the scales do with each other, making the individual items a viable alternative to the longer scales.

The past several years have seen an increasing emphasis on research investigations of factors associated with positive mental health. A growing body of data points to the conclusion that having a social support system (e.g., Bloom, 1975; Caplan, 1974; Rabkin & Streuning, 1976) and finding purpose and meaning in life (Moos, 1977) are major factors associated with reduced incidence of mental disorders. Although religion appears to be a potential source of both social supports and purpose and meaning in life, little emphasis has been placed on investigating the possible relationship of religion and health until quite recently (Bufford, 1982).

Several major problems must be overcome in seeking to examine the relationship between religion and health. First, research by Allport and his colleagues on the relationship between religion and prejudice using the Religious Orientation Survey demonstrated that simple measures of religiosity such as church affiliation are inadequate and their use may lead to seriously erroneous conclusions. Other major problems to be surmounted include the difficulty involved in operationalizing the religious dimension and the controversy which is often stirred when the operations inevitably fail to capture the full richness of the concepts involved.

Interest in measuring other aspects of religious attitudes and behavior, together with dissatisfaction with the adequacy of the Religious Orientation Scale, have prompted investigators to develop a number of additional scales to measure various aspects of religiosity. Two such scales are the Spiritual Well-Being Scale developed by Paloutzian and Ellison (Ellison & Paloutzian, 1978, 1979; Paloutzian, 1982; Paloutzian and Ellison, 1979a, b) and the Spiritual Maturity Scale developed by Ellison (Ellison, 1983). The present study investigates empirical correlates of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale and Spiritual Maturity Scales. It contributes to the validation necessary before these scales can be effectively used as a dependent measure in experimental studies of the religious dimension.

Ellison and Paloutzian developed the Spiritual Well-Being scale as a measure of the spiritual dimension of quality of life. A summary of the conceptualization, development and preliminary validation of the Spiritual Well-Being scale is presented in Ellison (1983). Ellison conceptualizes spiritual Well-Being as a continuous variable which is distinct from spiritual

health and spiritual maturity. “Spiritual *Well-Being* may not be the *same thing* as *spiritual health*. Rather, it arises from an underlying state of spiritual health and is an expression of it, much like to color of one’s complexion and pulse rate are expressions of good health.” (p. 332; emphasis original). Thus spiritual Well-Being may be viewed as a sign or indicator of spiritual health.

The Spiritual Well-Being scale was designed to measure two aspects of well—being, religious and existential. Paloutzian and Ellison define spiritual Well-Being as “the vertical dimension (which) refers to our sense of Well-Being in relation to God.” In contrast, existential Well-Being is “the horizontal dimension (which) refers to a sense of life purpose and life satisfaction, with no reference to anything specifically religious” (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1979a; cited in Ellison, 1983; p. 331). Although distinct to a degree, Ellison and Paloutzian acknowledge that religious and existential Well-Being are nonetheless overlapping dimensions at a conceptual level; the empirical data support such a view.

Factor analysis of the Spiritual Well-Being scale revealed two factors: a single factor which comprised the Religious Well-being subscale and two sub—factors, one measuring life direction and one measuring life satisfaction which loaded together on the Existential Well-Being subscale. Reliability is demonstrated by test—retest coefficients above .85 and internal consistency coefficients of greater than .75. Religious Well-Being and Existential Well-Being are positively correlated to a moderate degree, ranging from 10—30% of common variance in various studies.

So far validation studies of the Spiritual Well-Being scale have been limited. Results of these studies show that Spiritual Well-Being is negatively related to loneliness and value orientations emphasizing individualism, success and personal freedom; it is positively related to purpose in life, self—esteem, self—report of the quality of the person’s relationship with parents, family togetherness as a child, peer relations as a child, and social skills. Spiritual Well-Being is also positively correlated with a number of other religious measures and practices: doctrinal belief, worship orientation, frequency of church attendance and amount of time spent in personal devotions (though not frequency of devotions), and Intrinsic religious orientation on the

Religious Orientation Scale (Compise, Ellison & Kinsman, 1979; Ellison, 1983; Ellison & Paloutzian, 1978; 1979; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1979a, b).

Recently, Ellison developed the Spiritual Maturity Scale as a companion to the Spiritual Wellbeing Scale. Where the Spiritual Well-Being might be thought of as analogous to a measure of health, the Spiritual Maturity Scale is intended to measure the state of development of the individual's spiritual life, thus is more analogous to physical development. Initially, the Spiritual Maturity scale was a 20 item scale; more recently, Ellison has added an additional 10 items to the scale in an effort to measure additional dimensions of spiritual development not addressed in the first 20 items. At the present time little information is available regarding the Spiritual Maturity scale. However, it has been shown to have a moderate positive correlation with the Well-Being scales, suggesting that they are measuring related but distinct factors (personal communications).

The purpose of the present study is to provide further validation for the Spiritual Well-Being scale through examining its correlation with a number of demographic questions, self-report items, and the spiritual Maturity and Religious Orientation Scales, Specifically, it is hypothesized that Spiritual Well-Being (and Religious Well-being, Spiritual Wellbeing) will be positively correlated with Spiritual Maturity, Intrinsic Religiosity on the Religious Orientation Scale, frequency of church attendance, and importance of religion.

METHOD

Subjects

A group of 65 adults (18 years of age or older) in the Portland, Oregon area served as subjects. The subjects were drawn from personal contacts of the experimenters in home, work and educational settings, thus they comprise a "sample of convenience." The sample consisted of 25 men and 39 women with a mean age of 36.6 (S.D. = 10.5); gross family income ranged from less than \$6,000 to more than \$60,000 per year with the median in the \$15—20,000 range; 43 (66%) were married and 22 (34%) were single. In religious affiliation, 27% reported no religious

affiliation, 8% were Catholic, 2% Jewish, and 56% Protestant; the remaining 8% indicated Other religious affiliations (e.g., Hindu, Muslim)

Instruments

Spiritual Well-Being Scale. The Spiritual Well-Being Scale was developed by Paloutzian and Ellison to measure the quality of a person's spiritual "health." It consists of 20 items in a modified Likert format with no mid—point to prevent neutral responding. Ten items contain references to God and measure the dimension of Religious Well—being; the remaining ten items have no reference to God and measure existential well—being. Direction of scoring the items is reversed on about half of the items to minimize the role of response sets.

Spiritual Maturity Scale. The Spiritual Maturity Scale is a 20 item scale developed by Ellison (recently a 30 item version has been developed; it adds 10 additional items to the 20 item version). It uses the same format as the Spiritual Well-Being scale, but is designed to measure degree of maturity rather than health. The Spiritual Well-Being scale is roughly analogous to a measure of physical health, while the Spiritual Maturity Scale is roughly analogous to a measure of physical development. The two measures are thus intended to measure dimensions which are somewhat related, but distinct. In format the Spiritual Maturity Scale is much like the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, using the six point Likert format and with direction of scoring reversed on half of the items.

Religious Orientation Scale. The ROS was developed by Feagin (1964) and Allport and Ross (1967). It measures Intrinsic and Extrinsic religious orientations. Originally conceptualized as a unidimensional scale, the results of a number of studies have led to the conclusion that the Intrinsic and Extrinsic subscales are relatively unrelated. The Extrinsic dimension measures the individual's tendency to view religion as an activity which is instrumental in accomplishing other personal goals; persons high on this dimension tend to "use their religion" and to be characterized by a variety of prejudices. Individuals high on the Intrinsic dimension tend to focus their lives around their religion and view their other activities as instrumental in accomplishing religious goals; these individuals are low in prejudice. Individuals high on both the Intrinsic and

Extrinsic dimensions are described as “indiscriminately pro— religious” and are more prejudiced than persons high on the Extrinsic dimension alone, Individuals low on both Intrinsic and Extrinsic dimensions, though rarely examined, might be termed indiscriminately anti—religious (Hunt and King, 1971). The present study used the 21 item version developed by Feagin.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results for the 65 persons who completed the biographical questionnaire and the three scales are summarized in Table 1. Results for this sample are consistent with those of Ellison in showing that the Spiritual Well-Being Scale is positively correlated with both Religious and Existential Well-Being and that the Religious and Existential Well-Being Scales are positively correlated with each other. However, Existential Well-Being showed only a moderate correlation with Spiritual Well-Being ($r = .412$) and barely reached a significant relationship with Religious Well-Being on a one—tailed test; in this sample Religious Well-Being and Existential Well-Being share only 4% of common variance.

In general, correlations with other variables were consistent for all of the wellbeing scales. All were positively correlated with Spiritual Maturity, Intrinsic Religiosity, frequency of church attendance, frequency of family devotions, and importance of religion to the person. Spiritual and Religious Well-Being were positively correlated with frequency and duration of personal devotions; however, Existential Wellbeing was not significantly related to these variables. Religious Well-Being showed a positive correlation with religious knowledge, and a negative correlation with Extrinsic Religiosity; the other wellbeing scales were not significantly related to these variables. Finally, only Existential Well-Being was correlated with financial condition.

Spiritual Maturity was positively correlated with all three of the wellbeing scales. Surprisingly, it shared 66% of common variance with Religious Well—being. Spiritual Maturity also had significant positive correlations with Intrinsic Religiosity, frequency of church attendance, frequency and duration of personal devotions, frequency of family devotions,

importance of religion, and religious knowledge. Spiritual Maturity was negatively correlated with Extrinsic Religiosity.

The Religious Orientation Survey was included primarily to examine the relationship between Intrinsic Religiosity and the Spiritual Maturity and Well-Being Scales. Results confirmed the expected relationships. In addition, Intrinsic Religiosity was found to be significantly related to frequency of church attendance, frequency and duration of personal devotions, frequency of family devotions, and religious knowledge.

The single item Likert—type question about the importance of religion was included also primarily for validation purposes. However, in this study and a previous study (Bufford, 1983) this single item question has been found to share a high amount of common variance with Spiritual Well—being. Importance of religion shares over 65% of common variance with Religious Well-being, Spiritual Maturity and Intrinsic Religiosity in the present sample. In addition, importance of religion shares 36% of common variance with Spiritual Well-Being

Single item questions about frequency of church attendance and religious knowledge also were found to be strong predictors of Spiritual and Religious Well—being, Spiritual Maturity and Intrinsic Religiosity. Together, these results suggest that in circumstances where cost is great or brevity is essential, one or more of these single—item questions could be used quite effectively; these results are consistent with findings of Gorsuch and MacFarland (1972).

The present study has three limitations. First, the sample is clearly not a representative sample, thus generalization of the findings must be done with caution. Second, the correlational nature of the data makes inferences about causal relationships between religious behavior and Well-Being impossible. Finally, the data is entirely based on self—report. Thus any inaccuracy due to imperfect recall and inaccurate reporting of the data will distort the findings to some unknown degree.

In conclusion, the results of the present study provide substantial additional validation of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale and its subscales and the Spiritual Maturity Scale. At the same

time, the high degree of correlation between the Spiritual Maturity and Religious Well-Being Scales casts doubt on Ellison's initial hypothesis that these scales measure significantly different aspects of spiritual life. The present data also suggests that the Intrinsic Religiosity Subscale may be more useful as a measure of religiosity than Hunt and King (1971) suggest. Finally, several new single-item measures of religiosity have been shown to have promise as extremely useful measures when lengthier measures are impractical.

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Table 1
 Correlates of Spiritual Well-being and
 Spiritual Maturity Scales

| Variable | SWB | RWB | EWB | SM | I | IMPT REL |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
| RWB | .680 | | | | | |
| EWB | .412 | .204 | | | | |
| SM | .623 | .815 | .395 | | | |
| I | .581 | .764 | .266 | .798 | | |
| Importance of Religion | .604 | .824 | .240 | .821 | .849 | |
| E | -.172 | -.362 | .008 | -.428 | -.198 | .307 |
| Religious Knowledge | .225 | .462 | .042 | .484 | .419 | .558 |
| Freq. Church | | | | | | |
| Attendance | .513 | .639 | .240 | .581 | .666 | .711 |
| Freq. Pers. Devotions | .466 | .664 | .104 | .667 | .672 | .734 |
| Time: Pers. Devotions | .502 | .578 | .187 | .522 | .579 | .584 |
| Freq. Family Devotions | .361 | .277 | .343 | .290 | .295 | .330 |
| Age | -.001 | -.049 | .128 | .113 | .095 | -.026 |
| Education | -.144 | .012 | -.153 | -.078 | .020 | .071 |
| Income | -.126 | -.169 | .081 | -.124 | -.061 | -.038 |
| Financial condition | .225 | .019 | .258 | .100 | .020 | -.001 |
| Enjoy alone | .196 | .059 | .027 | .138 | .138 | .119 |
| Enjoy with people | .160 | .147 | .169 | .147 | .044 | .106 |
| Problems with People | .071 | .095 | .138 | .048 | -.490 | .023 |

N = 65

Significance:

$r \geq .201, p. < .05, \text{one tailed}$

$r \geq .240, p. < .05, \text{two tailed}$

