
UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF RELATIONAL FACTORS IN CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

DAVID B. SIMPSON
Valparaiso University

JODY L. NEWMAN
University of Oklahoma

DALE R. FUQUA
Oklahoma State University

Researchers developing multidimensional models of relational quality have largely neglected to consider the potential role of relational spirituality in their models. Recent relational spirituality models have emerged predominantly from a psychodynamic framework. The current study of 385 Christian adults was designed to expand the understanding of the associations between spiritual and relational dimensions. A principal components analysis of 10 measures of spirituality produced two components accounting for just over 50% of the variance. The components were labeled Positive Relationship with God and Instrumental Relationship with God. A second principal components analysis of 7 relationship scales resulted in a single component accounting for 55% of the variance and seemed to measure negative relational quality. This component was labeled Negative Relationships with Others. Using component scores, a multiple regression analysis was then conducted in which the two spirituality components were used to predict relational quality. The two spirituality components accounted for approximately 35% of the variance in the relational component. Theoretical and practical considerations are discussed and areas for further research are recommended.

Despite the longstanding interest in dimensions of interpersonal relationships and the more recent, though profound, emerging interest in spirituality, surprisingly little attention has been directed toward the relationship between these two important domains. The inherently relational nature of spirituality has been largely neglected in

model development. It seems reasonable, even likely, that relational dimensions present in horizontal (interpersonal) relationships (e.g., trust, intimacy, attachment, etc.) may also be meaningfully applied to vertical (spiritual) relationships. At the present time, very little is known about associations between religiousness/spirituality and relational functioning.

Relationship Functioning and Connections with Spirituality and Religion

Many people throughout history have claimed to have a relationship with God, and this is evident across many religions and in both historical and contemporary religious doctrine. Hill and Pargament (2003) stated: "to know God is, according to many traditions, the central function of religion. Systems of religious belief, practice, and relationships are designed to help bring people closer to the transcendent, however the transcendence may be defined" (p. 67). Hill and Hall (2002) argued that people live fundamentally within the context of relationship and reasoned that the quest for the transcendent or sacred involves a search for relationship. Thus, it seems to some that horizontal relationships might be connected in some way to a vertical relationship (with the Divine). Hill and Pargament illustrated this principle by stating "the primacy of human relationships is articulated by most of the world's religions through some variant of the Golden Rule (e.g., caring, love, compassion), and the vehicle for enacting these relationships within most religions is the religious congregation" (p. 69).

In this same context, Hill and Pargament (2003) highlighted philosopher Martin Buber's (1970) belief that "the relation to a human being is the proper metaphor for the relation to God" (p. 151). Buber

Please address correspondence to David B. Simpson, PhD,
Department of Psychology, Dickmeyer Hall, Valparaiso University,
1001 Campus Drive South, Valparaiso, IN 46383.

further commented that both the concept of God and the concept of self are relational. Philosopher Dallas Willard (1999) has suggested that people are designed for communication with God. This notion of a relational connection between humanity and the Divine is not new to people of various religious backgrounds. In fact, Willard argued that, from a Christian perspective, an intimate friendship is as available with God as it is in other close personal relationships. Hill and Hall (2002) emphasized that, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, people are perceived as capable of establishing and maintaining a relationship with the Divine. Psychologist David Benner (1998) argued such capability is intrinsic and stated:

we do not have a *part* of personality that relates to God or yearns to be in such relationship. The *totality* of our being yearns for and responds to such a relationship. Furthermore, our relationship with God is mediated by the same psychological process and mechanisms as those involved in relationships with other people.... Psychological and spiritual aspects of human functioning are inextricably interconnected.... Efforts to separate the spiritual, psychological, and physical aspects of persons inevitably result in a trivialization of each [italics added]. (p. 62)

Hall (2004) noted that these psychological and spiritual processes are likely automatic and outside of consciousness. These suppositions seem supported by Simpson, Newman, and Fuqua (2007), who found dimensions of the five factor model of personality significantly related to both a positive and negative relationship with God (based on a factor analysis of several widely used spirituality scales). Specifically, they found that Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness correlated positively with a component labeled Positive Relationship with God, and Neuroticism correlated negatively with the same component. Conversely, a second component labeled Negative Relationship with God was positively related to Neuroticism and negatively related to Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. These findings are generally supported by other research examining spirituality and the five factor model of personality (c.f. MacDonald, 2000; Maltby & Day, 2001a & b; Piedmont, 1999; Rahanaiah, Rielage, & Sharpe, 2001; Saroglou, 2002). In concordance with Benner's perspective, Hall (2004) asserted that Christians and people of many other religious traditions do not view mental health as an end in itself. Hall argued that, for Christians, mental health must be integrated into a model of spirituality and mental health that "articulate[s] spiritual health/maturity as an end in itself" (p. 67). This stance seems sensible if spirituality is viewed as

an intrinsic aspect of oneself that is related to the depths of personality. Accordingly, and as noted by Hall (2004), it is appropriate to expect internalized relational patterns to reliably and predictably influence spiritual functioning and development.

Over the previous 20 years, and despite Gorsuch's (1984) caution against further development of instruments measuring religious/spiritual constructs, research has continued to examine the psychometric properties of existing religious/spiritual instruments. Hill and Hood's (1999) compendium of religious and spirituality measures catalogs many of these efforts. In an effort to explore the potentially interactive nature of a relationship with God, Hall and Edwards (1996, 2002) developed the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI) based on a relational model of spiritual maturity that is founded on the premise that people possess a capacity for awareness of God and that people have the capacity to be in relationship with God. Hall and Edwards utilized an object relations framework to compare three developmental levels to maturational stages of human development including: (1) Unstable relationships (maturity of a young child), (2) Grandiose relationships (maturity of middle childhood and early adolescence), and (3) Realistic Acceptance (a more integrated approach to life found in late adolescence or adulthood). Hall and Edwards' (1996) initial factor analysis revealed three factors (Instability, Grandiosity, and Realistic Acceptance) representing the Quality dimension of a relationship with God. Despite the fact that these factors revealed important aspects of relational interaction with God from an object relations perspective, Hall and Edwards (2002) further explored the underlying constructs of the SAI and established the existence of a dimension reflecting disappointment with God. While this instrument is the only measure developed from a specific relational paradigm, the emergence of an additional dimension through factor analysis underscores the complex nature of relational interaction with God and confirms the need for further research to explore the relevance of other relational constructs to one's spiritual life and relationship with the Divine. Slater, Hall and Edwards (2001) seemed to agree when they argued "... the next step in the measurement of religion and spirituality is to explore the convergence among these various measures in order to begin to test broader conceptual frameworks" (p. 5).

The lack of a clear connection between horizontal and vertical relationships impedes empirical

research exploring relational spirituality and obfuscates the implications for psychological and spiritual health. The historical compartmentalization of spiritual and interpersonal domains has inevitably limited theoretical and conceptual formulations of these important realms of human experience. There seem to be compelling reasons to believe the two domains may be integrally related. For example, from a theological perspective, there would seem to be a strong basis for believing that one's relationship with others would be inextricably and fundamentally linked to one's relationship with God. This study was designed to expand the understanding of the associations between spiritual and relational dimensions. More specifically, the study examined commonalities between spiritual and relational dimensions derived from separate factor analyses of frequently utilized instruments from each domain. The specific research question addressed in this study was: What is the nature of the relationship between these two sets of constructs? Examination of the relationship between vertical and horizontal relational patterns may advance the development of the concept of relational spirituality and expand existing relational models.

METHOD

Participants and Procedures

Six hundred fifty adult (18 years and older) volunteer participants (from 3 Southeastern and 3 Southwestern states) were recruited by "word of mouth" through personal contacts ("Snowball" method) from various religious organizations, religiously-based schools, and places of worship. Due to the theoretical and theological assumptions on which the instruments were constructed (i.e., from a Judeo-Christian and monotheistic perspective), only participants who self-identified as "Christian" were asked to participate. In order to reduce the likelihood of "response sets," participants completed packets containing randomly ordered sets of instruments. Three hundred eighty five of the 650 packets distributed were returned and 370 (57%) were usable. The 15 unused packets contained insufficient data for analysis.

Demographics

The participants in this study were ethnically, relationally, and educationally homogeneous. Most of the respondents were Caucasian (93.5%), married (77.3%; 14.1% had never been married and 4.9% were divorced), and had parents who were married

or were married until death (75.9%). Many of the respondents had earned an undergraduate degree (66.6%, with 30.7% having also earned a graduate degree). The majority were females (65.4%) in their thirties (mean age = 39.8 years). This overtly Christian sample represented several Protestant denominations and a smaller contingent (3%) of Catholics. The majority (84.1%) of participants reported attending church or religious meetings at least once per week, and 53.8% attended more than once per week. Moreover, the participants devoted specific time to their religious activities (92% were active at least twice per week; 45% were active daily (including prayer); 21% engaged in religious activities more than once per day).

Instruments

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS). The seven-item RAS is a brief unifactorial measure of relational satisfaction (Hendrick, 1988; Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998). The concurrent validity of the RAS was demonstrated through significant positive correlations with other relational measures (e.g. commitment, satisfaction, investment). Hendrick (1988) found that the RAS was able to correctly classify 91% of couples who were together and 86% of couples who were apart (but once together). Reported internal consistency reliability was .86 and test-retest reliability was .85. According to Hendrick (1988), with minimal modification, the RAS could be suitable for assessing satisfaction in friendships as well. Participants in the current study were given the option to complete the RAS for either couples or friendships (depending on their relational status), as the intent was to assess general relational quality with an *important person*. This variation did not appear to negatively impact internal consistency reliability, as Cronbach's coefficient alpha for this sample was .91.

Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR). The ECR (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) is a 36-item self-report measure of attachment derived from a factor analysis of 323 items (representing 60 subscales) from previously existing self-report measures of adult romantic-attachment. According to Brennan et al., the resulting two dimensions, Avoidance and Anxiety, were highly correlated with existing measures of anxious and avoidant behavior (the actual correlations were not reported). Additionally, the two scales appeared orthogonal ($r = .11$). Reported internal consistency reliabilities for each 18-item subscale were

high (Avoidance: $\alpha = .94$; Anxiety: $\alpha = .91$). The internal consistency reliabilities were equally high for this sample (Avoidance: $\alpha = .93$; Anxiety: $\alpha = .91$).

Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale-Revised. Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona (1980) developed the 20-item revised version of the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Ferguson, 1978) to remedy problems with response bias and to improve discriminant validity. The instrument is the most frequently utilized measure of loneliness (Shaver & Brennan, 1991) and Russell et al. (1980) reported high internal consistency across two studies ($\alpha = .94$) and a high correlation with the original scale ($r = .91$). The internal consistency reliability for this sample was .90.

Trust Inventory. The Trust Inventory (Couch, Adams, & Jones, 1996; Couch & Jones, 1997) was developed to measure Partner (romantic/relational), Network (friends, family) and Generalized (people in general) trust simultaneously. Couch et al. (1996) reported high internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .87 - .92$) and stability across a nine week period ($r = .74 - .82$) for the three scales. Scales correlated as expected with extant measures of generalized and relational trust as well as various measures of relational status. Due to lack of independence of Network trust, an abbreviated form of the instrument (excluding Network trust) was used at the recommendation of the authors. In this sample the internal consistency reliabilities for Partner and Generalized trust were .92 and .91, respectively.

Fear-of-Intimacy Scale (FIS). Descutner and Thelen (1991) developed the FIS to assess the intimacy construct independent of current relational status. The 35-item, single-factor instrument was initially developed and validated on an undergraduate sample and yielded high internal consistency ($\alpha = .93$) and a 1-month test-retest correlation of .89. Doi and Thelen (1993) replicated the original study using a middle-aged sample. As in Descutner and Thelen's study, internal consistency was high (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$). Construct validity was demonstrated in both studies as the FIS was significantly correlated in the appropriate direction with measures of loneliness, state and trait anxiety, social intimacy, self-disclosure and reports of relationship satisfaction, and emotional closeness. Interestingly, the means and standard deviations were similar across the two divergent samples. For the current study, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was also .92.

Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS). The SWBS (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982) was designed to measure

both existential well-being (EWB) and religious well-being (RWB). EWB represents the individual's sense of purpose and satisfaction in life and adjustment to their surroundings while RWB represents a person's perceptions of their own spiritual and religious life (Bufford, Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991). Paloutzian and Ellison (1982) reported high test-retest reliability coefficients (.86 for EWB; .96 for RWB), and moderately high internal consistency reliabilities (.78 for EWB, .87 for RWB). The SWBS is a good general index of well-being that correlates well with other measures of well-being, indicating sufficient validity, and item content reveals obvious face validity (Boivin, Kirby, Underwood, & Silva, 1999; Bufford et al., 1991). Despite recent criticism regarding ceiling effects (e.g., Slater et al., 2001), the SWBS remains a frequently utilized measure of spiritual functioning. Cronbach's coefficient alphas for this sample were .85 for EWB and .88 for RWB.

Religious Orientation Scale-Revised (I/E-R). In order to accommodate people with lower reading levels, Gorsuch and Venable (1983) developed the Age Universal I-E scale as an alternative (and interchangeable) form of the Allport and Ross (1967) Religious Orientation Scale. Gorsuch and McPherson (1989) revised the Age Universal I-E scale to reflect Kirkpatrick's (1989) division of the extrinsic construct (into personally and socially extrinsic) and named the resulting instrument the Intrinsic/Extrinsic-Revised (I/E-R). The internal consistency reliability (.83) of the Intrinsic scale of the I/E-R is sufficient and comparable to that found in the Age-Universal Scale (Hill, 1999). The lower internal consistency reliabilities of the revised Ep, Es, and Ep/Es were .57, .58, and .65, respectively, and are likely due to fewer items in each scale (Hill, 1999). The internal consistency reliabilities for this sample were .74, .64, .62, and .61 for the Intrinsic, Ep, Es, and Ep/Es subscales respectively.

Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI). Hall and Edwards (1996) developed the SAI from an object relations and contemplative spirituality perspective to measure spiritual development and maturity. The instrument assesses one's awareness of God and quality of relationship with God across four dimensions (Instability, Disappointment, Grandiosity, and Realistic Acceptance) (Hall & Edwards, 1996, 2002). According to Tisdale (1999), face validity is high as the items clearly tap the desired domain, and recent studies (Hall & Edwards, 2002) revealed improved internal consistency reliabilities for each

TABLE 1
Principal Components Analysis of Spirituality Scales

	Component 1	Component 2	<i>h</i> ²
Religious Well-Being	.88		.77
Existential Well Being	.74		.60
Intrinsic Religious Orientation	.60		.37
Extrinsic Religious Orientation-Personal		.65	.43
Extrinsic Religious Orientation-Social		.41	.17
SAI-Awareness	.85		.76
SAI-Realistic Acceptance	.74		.56
SAI-Disappointment	-.41	.39	.32
SAI-Grandiosity		.66	.50
SAI-Instability	-.47	.59	.57
Initial Eigenvalues	3.51	1.54	
Sums of Squared Loadings	3.43	1.62	
Percentage of Variance	34.26	16.22	

of the five factors (Awareness, .95; Disappointment, .90; Realistic Acceptance, .83; Grandiosity, .73; and Instability, .84). Additionally, expected theoretical consistencies are evidenced by the correlations between the SAI and the Bell Object Relations Inventory (BORI), suggesting satisfactory internal validity (Tisdale; Hall & Edwards, 2002). Internal consistency reliabilities for this sample were .96 for Awareness, .94 for Disappointment, .87 for Realistic Acceptance, .66 for Grandiosity, and .80 for Instability.

Demographics Questionnaire. The participants completed a demographics questionnaire assessing typical background information and items assessing religious affiliation and religious involvement.

RESULTS

Principal Components Analysis of Spirituality Scales

A principal components analysis was performed on the set of 10 spirituality scales in order to explore the underlying structure within this set of scales. Examination of both KMO (.79) and Bartlett's test of sphericity [$\chi^2(55) = 890.95, p < .001$] indicated that a principal components analysis of the correlation matrix was appropriate. Initially, three components with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were extracted. However, given that use of the Kaiser rule tends

to produce too many components, the scree plot was also examined. The scree plot suggested that a two-component solution was more appropriate. Both oblique and orthogonal rotations were examined. Because correlations among the components were negligible, varimax rotation was determined to be most appropriate. Component scores were generated for all participants and saved for use in subsequent analyses. Table 1 presents the component loadings, communalities, initial eigenvalues, sums of squared loadings following rotation, and the percentage of variance associated with each component. The two components accounted for just over 50% of the variance. After reviewing the component loadings, the first component was labeled Positive Relationship with God (PRG) and seems to reflect a satisfying and stable internal awareness of God's involvement in one's life that fosters meaning, purpose and direction. The second component was labeled Instrumental Relationship with God (IRG), as it seems to reflect a search for both intrapersonal and interpersonal security through a utilitarian approach to one's relationship with God.

Principal Components Analysis of Relationship Scales

In order to explore the underlying structure among the set of relationship measures, a second

TABLE 2
Principal Components Analysis of Relational Scales

	Component 1	h^2
RAS-Relational Satisfaction	-.66	.43
ECR-Avoidance	.83	.70
ECR-Anxiety	.57	.33
UCLA-Loneliness	.77	.59
TI-Partner Trust	-.86	.73
TI-General Trust	-.62	.38
Fear-of-Intimacy	.83	.68
Initial Eigenvalue	3.84	
Sum of Squared Loadings	3.84	
Percentage of Variance	54.90	

TABLE 3
Multiple Regression Summary Table for Spirituality Components Predicting Negative Relationship with Others (n = 298)

Variable	b	Standard Error of b	t -ratio	Semipartial Correlation
PRG	-.49	.044	-11.02**	-.52
IRG	.27	.044	6.25**	.29

Note. PRG = Positive Relationship with God; IRG = Instrumental Relationship with God

* Because the two spirituality components are orthogonal, the semipartial correlations are equal to the zero order correlations and the standardized beta weights, which are not reported in the table.

** $p < .001$

principal components analysis was performed on the seven relationship scales. KMO was .84, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant [$\chi^2(21) = 1175.44, p < .001$], indicating that a principal components analysis of the correlation matrix was again appropriate. Initially, one component with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 was extracted. Examination of the scree plot further indicated that a single component solution was appropriate. Component scores were again saved for subsequent analyses. Table 2 presents the component loadings, communalities, initial eigenvalue, the sum of squared loadings, and the percentage of variance associated with the component for the second analysis. The single component accounted for nearly 55% of the variance, as noted in the table. After reviewing the component loadings, the relational component was labeled Negative Relationship with Others (NRO), seeming to reflect a relational style marked by both fear and avoidance of

intimacy, difficulty trusting, loneliness, and general dissatisfaction in relationships.

Multiple Regression Analysis

In order to further examine the relations between the spirituality and relational components, a simultaneous regression analysis was performed. The two spirituality components were used as predictors of the relational component in the regression analysis. The results of this analysis indicated that the regression of the relational components on a linear combination of the two spirituality components was statistically significant, $F(2, 295) = 80.23, p < .001$. The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 3. The two spirituality components accounted for approximately 35% of the variance in the relational component, $R = .59$. The squared semipartial correlation of the Positive Relationship with God

component was .27, and the same value for the Instrumental Relationship with God component was .08. It seems important that the two spirituality components accounted for slightly more than one third of the variance in the relational component.

Given the exploratory nature of this investigation, the question arose about the potential for some interaction of the two spirituality components in relationship to the relational component. An interaction vector for the two spirituality components was computed and tested for statistical significance. While the interaction was found to be statistically significant, $F(1, 294) = 3.88, p < .05$, it provided no substantively meaningful increase in the variance accounted for, as the increase in R^2 due to the interaction was .008.

DISCUSSION

Previous research by Hall and colleagues (Hall, Brokaw, Edwards, & Pike, 1998; Hall & Edwards, 1996, 2002) provided support for a measure of relational spirituality based on an object relations framework. In an effort to test "broader conceptual frameworks" as suggested by both Slater et al. (2001) and Hill and Pargament (2003), this study examined the convergence among several measures of spirituality and relationships. The results of this study expand support for a relational view of spirituality (beyond object relations) based on the principle components analysis of frequently utilized measures of spirituality. The findings of this study also provide evidence that, for Christians, one's relationship with God is significantly related to relationships with others.

Structural Nature of the Components

The underlying structure of the 10 spirituality scales utilized in this study seems to possess significant meaning at the theoretical level. The first component, Positive Relationship with God (Vertical Dimension 1), had large positive relationships with Religious Well-Being, SAI-Awareness, Existential Well-Being, SAI-Realistic Acceptance, and Intrinsic Religious Orientation and moderate negative relationships with SAI-Instability and SAI-Disappointment. This positive relational style toward God seems to be characterized by both an internal perception that God is involved in one's life (e.g., I believe that God loves me and cares about me from the Religious Well-Being scale) and an ability to remain connected with God during spiritually chal-

lenging times (*There are times when I feel disappointed with God* from the SAI-Disappointment scale and *When this happens, I still want our relationship to continue* from the SAI-Realistic Acceptance scale). Given the inclusion of Existential Well-Being in this component, it appears that this positive relational style facilitates a sense of purpose, direction and realization of meaning in life.

Interestingly, the structure of the first spirituality component in this study closely resembled that reported in the Simpson et al. (2007) study using largely the same scales with a demographically similar sample. Simpson et al. found that SAI-Awareness, Religious Well-Being, Intrinsic Religious Orientation, and Existential Well-Being (in that order) shared relationships with a single component. The emergence of the same four primary spirituality scales, which are related to the same component in both studies, suggests stability in this first component and implies the existence of an internalized style of relational spirituality among Christians.

Hall and Edwards (2002) found that each of the SAI scales had small (but significant) correlations with measures of Extrinsic Religious orientation. Based on their findings they argued that relational quality with God is negligibly impacted by religious motivation measured by I/E-R. Nevertheless, the second spirituality component in this analysis, Instrumental Relationship with God (Vertical Dimension 2), had large positive relationships with SAI-Grandiosity, Extrinsic Religious Orientation-Personal, and SAI-Instability and moderate positive relationships with Extrinsic Religious Orientation-Social and SAI-Disappointment. This component was labeled Instrumental Relationship with God because it appears to measure a utilitarian approach to gaining both intrapersonal and interpersonal security and connection with God and others. It is clear that, based on the component loadings, the utilitarian quality of the Extrinsic dimension of the I/E model is an important feature of this component, e.g., *I pray mainly to gain relief and protection* from the Extrinsic Religious Orientation-Personal scale. Slater et al. (2001) argued that people are less likely to use religion as a means to social status, rather religion and spirituality "have become intensely *personal* [italics added] and the direction of new measures in the field reflects this shift" (p. 17). The structure of this spirituality component appears to support their argument, as an examination of the items from the three scales with the largest relationships (SAI-

Grandiosity, Extrinsic Religious Orientation-Personal, and SAI-Instability) seem to collectively reflect a manipulative and controlling attempt to maintain relational status and position with God as a means to gain a *personal* sense of peace and comfort. Based on the item wordings and theoretical foundation of the SAI items (object relations), this somewhat ostentatious sense of one's relationship with God might reflect an intrapsychic avoidance of divine rejection. A sample item from the SAI-Grandiosity scale (*I find my prayers to God are more effective than other people's*) seems to capture these intrapsychic efforts to express an important relational connection with God.

There also appears to be a meaningful structure across the seven relationship scales employed in this study. The relational component seems to reflect a negative relational style and was labeled Negative Relationship with Others (Horizontal Dimension). Fear-of-Intimacy, ECR-Avoidance, UCLA-Loneliness, and ECR-Anxiety had large positive relationships with this component, while TI-Partner Trust, RAS-Relational Satisfaction, and TI-General Trust had large negative relationships with this same component. This component seems to reflect a perceived relational quality in which one struggles with trust (e.g., *I worry about being abandoned* from the ECR-Anxiety scale), both internally fears and actively avoids intimacy (e.g., *I would feel comfortable keeping very personal information to myself* from the Fear of Intimacy scale), and struggles with emotional isolation (e.g., *There is no one I can turn to* from the UCLA-Loneliness scale). Such avoidance of intimacy has obvious negative implications for the development of trust and satisfaction.

Structural Similarities and Relationships Between the Horizontal and Vertical Dimensions

Gorsuch (1984) discussed the implications of viewing religion as either unidimensional or multidimensional and argued "the resolution could be *both/and* [italics original] rather than either or. There may be a general religious dimension ... that can be subdivided into dimensions" (p. 232). At a theoretical level, the results of the current study seem to support Gorsuch's assertions and suggest that relational spirituality can be subdivided into at least two dimensions (represented by the two spirituality components).

Of additional interest in this study was the potential relationship between vertical and horizontal relational dimensions. Hall and colleagues (Hall, Brokaw, Edwards, & Pike, 1998; Hall & Edwards, 1996, 2002) found connections between spiritual and relational functioning as they developed the SAI based on object relations theory. However, the current study broadens the empirical support linking relational spirituality and horizontal relational functioning by utilizing several frequently used spirituality and relational measures from different theoretical perspectives. Accordingly, the connection between relationship with others and relationship with God does not appear theoretically confined to psychodynamic processes.

The fact that these similar and empirically-derived components are related supports Benner's (1998) theoretical argument that both psychological and spiritual aspects of the human condition are inextricably connected. The current study of Christians also provides empirical support for Hall's (2004) notion of implicit relational representations (internal mental models of relationships). Based on the results reported here, these mental models consist of at least two dimensions: (1) relationship with others, and (2) relationship with the Divine. The relationship between these two dimensions might represent a meta-relational style employed in both relational dimensions (similar to what Hall considered the internalized codes of emotional and relational processing).

Hall (2004) argued that it is appropriate to expect internalized relational patterns to influence spirituality. The current findings using different measures of spirituality provide additional evidence of a connection between horizontal and vertical relational functioning. Specifically, the regression model supported the idea that relational style with God is related to relational style with others, as the spirituality components were significant predictors of relational functioning with others. The fact that 35% of the variance in the horizontal relational dimensions (Negative Relationship with Others) is accounted for by the vertical relational dimensions indicates that these dimensions are substantively related. Moreover, the amount of variance attributed to Positive Relationship with God highlights the potential impact positive relational spirituality could have on one's relationships with others. Likewise, this variance could also reflect the impact one's relationship with others may have on positive relational spirituality. Based on these findings,

it seems prudent to consider the inclusion of dimensions of relational spirituality in models of horizontal relational quality (at least for Christians). Furthermore, given the documented correlations between emotional health and positive religious functioning, it seems possible that such significant correlations could be a function of the connection between positive horizontal and vertical relational functioning (people feel better because they are relating better interpersonally and spiritually). Obviously, this is an empirical question that cannot be answered from these data. Along this line of reasoning, Positive Relationship with God could also be viewed as more than a means to achieve horizontal relational stability and emotional health. Given the relational nature of the Judeo-Christian view of God, this positive dimension of relational spirituality may reflect the very goal of many Christians' spiritual lives. Again, however, further research is required to make such distinctions.

Collectively the results of this study revealed meaningful vertical and horizontal relational dimensions derived from a collection of frequently used measures of spiritual and relational functioning. The findings strengthen the support for previously conceptualized theoretical models of each dimension, and the substantive relationship between the vertical and horizontal dimensions expands previous research exploring these connections. Practically, the results emphasize the importance of including relational spirituality in the overall view of emotional and relational health. Nevertheless, exploring the directionality of the relationship between the dimensions could improve the practical application and integration of the relational dimensions through increased understanding of the theorized meta-relational style. Until then, the results suggest that people may benefit from exploring their own relational functioning across both dimensions. Such exploration may reveal personally (or clinically) relevant connections between vertical and horizontal relating that could facilitate growth in one or both dimensions and thus reduce relational (and emotional) distress. Additional research is needed to explore the potential impact of change in one relational dimension on the other. For example, do the beneficial effects of awareness, insight, self-understanding, and behavior change on relationships with others generalize to individuals' relationships with God and vice versa? These practical applications highlight the need for research exploring the clinical utility of more broadly conceptualized (beyond object relations) relational models.

Limitations

The sample in this study consisted mostly of college educated, Caucasian Christians. Caution is warranted when attempting to generalize to other populations. Additional evidence from demographically diverse cultures (including religiously diverse) could improve our understanding of these important constructs. The research examining relational spirituality is relatively new and developing. There is an obvious need for further exploration. However, as in the current study, much of the research relies on correlational methods of examining cognitive representations of theoretically intrinsic constructs. Accordingly, the amount of error attributable to method variance is unknown, although Spector (2006) suggested that the impact of method variance has often been exaggerated. This issue underscores some of the challenges of attempting to measure spiritual constructs. Consideration should also be given to the fact that ceiling effects were particularly evident on the Spiritual Well-Being Scale. This issue is common among overtly religious samples. There are also some inherent limitations associated with the use of largely *explicit* measures to tap what appear to be largely *implicit* experiences or patterns.

The nature of the components derived from the spirituality measures in this study may be important. Many questions, though, about the reliability and validity of the component scores remain unanswered. Perhaps the most important from our point of view is the selection of measures of spirituality for this study. We used both theoretical and practical reasoning to select a subset of existing measures. The components extracted and interpreted are heavily influenced by the selection of measures and the characteristics of our sample. Certainly, the most fundamental questions about the structure of measures of spirituality will require the inclusion of a broader range of measures of spirituality and a more heterogeneous sample.

With these issues in mind the results of this study nevertheless offer substantial footing from which to pursue additional research in relational spirituality. Clearly, unpacking the components in this study into efficient measures of the respective dimensions is a worthy pursuit. Additionally, from a Christian worldview, the importance of this study is that it provides empirical evidence of the principle that Christ himself taught regarding the two great commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all of your heart and

with all of your soul and with all of your mind . . . (and) love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew. 22:37-39; NIV). Any efforts within the integration of Christian theology and psychology must have as a central focus, in both practice and research, the relationship of our walk with God in Christ and its role in our relationships with others.

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AUTHORS

SIMPSON, DAVID B. *Address*: Department of Psychology, Dickmeyer Hall, Valparaiso University, 1001 Campus Drive South, Valparaiso, IN 46383. *Title*: Assistant Professor. *Degrees*: BA, University of Oklahoma; MS, Georgia State University; PhD, University of Oklahoma. *Specializations*: Integration of psychology and theology, counselor development, gender issues.

NEWMAN, JODY L. *Address*: Department of Educational Psychology, 820 Van Vleet Oval, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK 73019. *Title*: Professor. *Degrees*: BS, MS, PhD, University of North Dakota. *Specializations*: Counseling Psychology.

FUQUA, DALE R. *Address*: 3700 Bellwood Drive, Norman, 73072. *Title*: Regents Professor. *Degrees*: BA, MA, Eastern Illinois University; PhD, Indiana University. *Specializations*: Research Methodology and Counseling.

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