

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PERSONALITY,  
RELIGIOSITY, SPIRITUALITY, AND MYSTICISM

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## Abstract

Empirical research has demonstrated differences between religiosity and spirituality; the current study further clarifies the constructs by exploring their respective divergent and convergent validities in relation to two higher-order factors of the Big Five personality variables, traditionalism and transformation. The current study examines the relationships among personality, spirituality, religiosity and mysticism. Predictions were partially supported. Participants high on traditionalism and low on transformation scored higher in extrinsic religious orientation compared to those low on traditionalism and high on transformation. Participants low on traditionalism and high on transformation did not score higher on spirituality compared to those high on traditionalism and low on transformation. Participants high on intrinsic religious motivation and low on extrinsic motivation were more spiritual than those low on intrinsic motivation and high on extrinsic; and, participants high on spirituality and low on religiosity reported more mystical experiences than those low on spirituality and high on religiosity.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
Religiosity.....	2
Spirituality and mysticism.....	3
Conceptual differences between religiosity and spirituality.....	5
Religiosity, spirituality, and the Big Five.....	8
Religiosity, spirituality, and the Big Two.....	10
Predictions and current study.....	13
METHOD.....	15
Participants.....	15
Measures.....	16
RESULTS.....	18
DISCUSSION.....	21
Limitations.....	25

## LIST OF TABLES

1. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Estimates.....	32
2. Descriptive Statistics of Comparison Groups.....	33
3. Correlations.....	34

## INTRODUCTION

The majority of Americans today state that religion or spirituality hold integral places in their everyday lives, making the topic of great importance to the understanding of human nature (Hill et al., 2000; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott 1999). Though religion and its role in people's lives have received substantial focus in the psychological literature since the turn of the twentieth century, focus has substantially increased in the scientific literature in the past three to four decades (Zinnbauer et al., 1999). Since the 1960s, a cultural shift has occurred in which U.S. citizens have begun to distinguish between the notions of religiosity and spirituality (Roof, 1999). Researchers suggest that in today's society, it is becoming increasingly common for U.S. citizens to refer to themselves as spiritual but not religious (Hood, Hill, & Williamson, 2005; Hill, Pargament, Hood, McCullough, Swyers, Larson et al, 2000; Saucier & Skrzypińska, 2006; Wink, Ciciolla, Dillon, & Tracy, 2007). Hill et al (2000) stated that Western society has had a recent, growing "disillusionment" with religious institutions, and that increasing numbers of individuals have gravitated toward the more favored trend of individual spirituality (p. 58).

In addition to its focus on the distinction between religiosity and spirituality, research has focused on the extent to which personality traits covary with individuals' religious or spiritual tendencies (Maltby & Day, 2001; Saroglou, 2002; Simpson, Newman, & Fuqua, 2007; Wink et al., 2007). For example, spirituality is associated with openness to experience (Saucier & Skrzypińska, 2006), while religiosity is associated with conscientiousness and agreeableness (Saroglou, 2001). Mystical experience has also been examined in relation to religiosity and spirituality and is more closely associated

with spirituality (Saucier & Skrzypińska, 2006). The aim of the current study is to further examine the relationships among personality traits and individuals' tendencies toward religiosity or spirituality, as well as the relationships among religiosity, spirituality and mysticism. The following sections will review some widely used definitions of religion and spirituality and the operational definitions utilized in the current study.

### *Religiosity*

The word religion comes from the Latin *religio*, which refers to the human bond with a greater-than-human power (Wulff, 1997). Hill et al. (2000) describe the essential aspect of religion as the search for the sacred. Although this aspect has been described as the essential core of both religion and spirituality, the religious search is associated with an organized, structured system of beliefs with devoted followers. Zinnbauer et al. (1999) defined religion as the pathway taken in search of a sacred destination, or the means by which an individual seeks a sacred goal. This individual search for sacred meaning is considered an *intrinsic* religious motivation. Allport and Ross (1967) stated that individuals with intrinsic religious orientations use their religion as their “master motive” in life (p. 434). These intrinsically-oriented individuals tend to focus on internalizing their religious creed, and living by that creed's prescriptions. However, as Allport and Ross (1967) stated, religiousness may also encompass the search for *extrinsic* individual, group, familial, or community ends. Extrinsically-oriented individuals utilize their religious creed for self-oriented “primary needs” (p. 434). For example, extrinsically-oriented individuals may seek happiness or health, sanctified marriage, social belongingness, or guidance in problem-solving through their religious affiliation (Zinnbauer et al., 1999). These combinations of sacred and secular searches take place

within the context of a religious doctrine or institution, which involves group rituals and an organized system of beliefs.

The organized and tradition-oriented aspects of religion have been emphasized in numerous definitions (Hill et al., 2000; Saucier & Skrzypińska, 2006; Wink et al., 2007). Wink et al. (2007) described religious beliefs as the following: “traditional,” “church-centered,” and “institutionalized” (pp 1052-1053); and defined religiousness as being demonstrated by belief in God, an afterlife, the power of prayer, and regular attendance at a place of worship. Similarly, Saucier and Skrzypińska (2006, p. 1260) assessed “tradition-oriented religiousness,” which they described as involving reliance on authority such as a trusted scripture or church figure. This authority represents a shared point of reference for an organized group of religious followers.

Reliance on authority has been a focus of other research as well. Hood, Hill, and Williamson (2005) state that religion appeals to its followers by offering a structured system of meaning and purpose in a world that is otherwise seemingly fragmented and anxiety-provoking. Furthermore, Iannaccone (1994) states that the more authoritative and strict a religious tradition is, the stronger the beliefs of its followers. Religions with specifically laid-out beliefs and guidelines leave little room for wavering, thus these religions may facilitate stricter adherence and strong(er) believers.

### *Spirituality and Mysticism*

Like religiosity, spirituality is a construct embodied by the search for the sacred (Hill et al., 2000). Whereas religiosity refers to an individual’s adherence to an organized, structured system of beliefs with devoted followers, spirituality seemingly is more individualistic in that it refers to personal experience and spiritual growth (Zinnbauer et



al. 1999). The word spirituality comes from the Latin *spiritus*, meaning “breath of life” (Hill et al., 2000, p. 57; Wulff, 1997); the Latin *spiritulis* refers to a person who is of the spirit. Wink et al. (2007, p. 1054) defined “spiritual seekers” as individuals who do not adhere to an institutionalized system of beliefs, but focus more on an exploratory search for the sacred and a connection with the divine. Spirituality may involve the search for ultimate truth or meaning in life, an experience or experiences with God or the divine, experiences of a transcendent nature, and/or ultimately personal growth and transformation. As Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, and Gorsuch (2003) stated, spiritual individuals often report experiences of a mystical nature; mystical experiences may be an essential aspect of spirituality (Saucier and Skrzypińska, 2006).

Hood (1975) described eight qualities essential to the mystical experience. These qualities may be experienced in various intensities depending upon the individual and the situation. The *ego quality* of the experience involves the absorption of the self into something greater than the human ego, and may involve a loss of sense of self. The *unifying quality* refers to the perception of all things as being interconnected, or the experience of oneness or unification with everything in the universe. The *inner subjective quality* of the mystical experience refers to the individual’s sense of inner connection to all things, animate or inanimate. The *temporal/spatial quality* refers to the alteration of the individual’s perceptions of both time and space, with the possibility of an extreme experience resulting in a perception of “timelessness” or “spacelessness” (Hood, p. 32). The *noetic quality* of mysticism refers to the experience as “a source of valid knowledge” (Hood, p. 32), which is obtained nonrationally and intuitively through the experience, yet is recognized by the individual as valid and not merely subjective. *Ineffability* refers to

the indescribability of the experience, the impossibility of explaining the experience in conventional language, and the ability of only the individual to comprehend the experience. The *positive affect* aspect of the mystical experience refers to the joyful or blissful nature of the experience. And finally, the *religious quality* refers to the “intrinsic sacredness” of the experience to the individual, which may include feelings of “mystery, awe, and/or reverence,” expressed independently of any specific religious tradition (Hood, p. 32).

Katz (1983) stated that mysticism is often associated with the idea of religious rebellion and the individual’s desire to place his or her “own experience above the doctrines of the accepted authorities” (p. 3). He notes, however, that although mystical experience may challenge religious doctrine, it contains certain elements that are integral to both religious and spiritual individuals. For example, the mystic may experience unity with a nonphysical object or entity, which is interpreted as God, Being, nirvana, etc. These terms are associated with various religious traditions, but also are associated with nontraditional spirituality as well. While religion and spirituality have similar core dimensions (i.e. the search for the sacred; mystical experiences), there are clear distinctions between these two.

#### *Conceptual Differences between Religiosity and Spirituality*

Differences are clear when considering comparisons of the following terms: “tradition-oriented religiousness” and “subjective spirituality” (Saucier & Skrzypińska, 2006, p. 1260); “religiousness” and “spiritual seeking” (Wink et al., 2007, p. 1055); and “organized religion” and “personal spirituality” (Zinnbauer et al., 1999, p. 901). These descriptions each refer to the contrast between adherence to a traditional religious

framework and individually seeking one's own spiritual path. Zinnbauer et al. (1999) review relevant literature that has focused on distinguishing the organized, social, and tradition-oriented aspects of religion from the personal, individualistic, transcendent nature of spirituality. For example, Emblen (1992) defines religion as "a system of organized beliefs and worship which a person practices," and spirituality as "a personal life principle which animates a transcendent quality of relationship with God" (p. 45). The organized and social nature of religion implies a communal institution that one might adhere to, whereas the transcendent, individual nature of spirituality emphasizes personal growth and experience.

There is a distinction in both theoretical and the lay definitions of religion and spirituality. For example, Zinnbauer et al. (1997) had participants self-report their opinions, attitudes, and beliefs about spirituality and religiousness, the conceptual relationship between spirituality and religiousness, and the perceived positive or negative aspects of each. Participants defined spirituality as *personal and experiential in terms of a relationship with God* and religiousness as *a focus not only on personal beliefs, but on organized and institutional systems of beliefs involving church attendance and membership*. Results were that religiousness was associated with authoritarianism, religious orthodoxy, parental influence, and church attendance, while spirituality correlated strongly with measures of mystical experiences and New Age beliefs. New Age beliefs most often constitute individual spiritual practices that do not adhere to any specific religious tradition (Farias, Claridge, & Lalljee, 2005).

Schlehofer, Omoto, and Adelman (2008) also explored the lay definitions of spirituality and religion in a sample of older adults aged 61 to 93 years. Participants were

selected from three retirement communities, one of which self-identified as a Christian community, two of which did not affiliate with any particular religion. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they identified as religious and/or spiritual, as well as to define what these constructs meant to them and what roles the constructs played in their lives. Schlehofer et al. (2008) found that most participants identified religion as a system which provided meaning and a framework for living life. Theistic concepts (i.e. belief in God; belief in a Divine Creator) were associated more closely with religion than with spirituality. However, non-theistic concepts (i.e. an inner self; a personal spirit; spiritual transformation or growth) were associated equally with religion and spirituality. As stated earlier, both religion and spirituality seem to embody a search for the sacred. These findings imply that while religion may focus more directly on a specific source of divine power or sovereignty, both religion and spirituality may include the seeking of inner spiritual growth. Consistent with Allport and Ross (1967), participants' descriptions of religion included the search for non-sacred means. For example, participants associated religion with fellowship and community and the seeking of social ends. Findings strongly support the notion that religion provides its followers with extrinsic ends such as a social outlet, just as it provides intrinsic ends (a personal system of meaning; inner peace; spiritual growth; Allport & Ross, 1967; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989).

Schlehofer et al. (2008) found that participants associated "organizationally-based practices" more with religion than with spirituality (p. 417). These included ritual aspects such as attending church weekly and adhering to a specified "code of conduct" (p. 421). codes of conduct were mentioned significantly more in reference to religion than spirituality. Participants asserted that within religious systems of beliefs there were codes

and rules that provided the guidelines for being a good person. Schlehofer et al. cited one participant as referencing the “official” nature of religious codes and the idea of people “imposing” their way of thinking through religion (p. 421). These findings coincide with findings by Zinnbauer et al. (1997), which showed participants do associate religiousness with authoritarianism and religious orthodoxy. These findings also support Hood et al. (2005) notion of reliance on authority as an integral aspect of religion.

Although there is a distinction in both theoretical and the lay definitions of religion and spirituality, it is important to note, as Zinnbauer et al. (1997; 1999) pointed out, that one should take caution when viewing these constructs through entirely distinct lenses. Zinnbauer et al. (1997; 1999) stated that there has been a recent polarization of the terms spirituality and religion. Hill et al. (2000) refer to this polarization as a growing trend in which religion receives a negative connotation as a hindrance to spiritual growth and experience. Conversely, as stated by Wheeler and Hyland (2007), people who tend to be religious often tend to be spiritual. The question of the extent to which different individuals draw more toward religious or spiritual systems of belief remains. Previous research has examined the role of personality in this process; a number of findings support distinctions between personality variables and individual patterns of religiosity and spirituality.

#### *Religiosity, Spirituality, and the Big Five*

Piedmont (2005) suggests that religiosity and spirituality can best be differentiated in terms of their relation to individual differences. Research supports consistent relationships between individuals’ personality traits and levels of religiosity

and spirituality (Maltby & Day, 2000; Piedmont, 1999; Saroglou, 2001; Saucier & Skrzypińska, 2006; Wink et al., 2007).

In a meta-analysis of studies that utilized the Big Five factors of personality (Goldberg, 1990), religiosity, and spirituality, Saroglou (2001) found religiosity to be significantly correlated with conscientiousness ( $r = .18, p < .001$ , p. 21). Religious individuals tended to be slightly more conscientious, implying that they preferred order, structure, and guidance. This is consistent with the notion that religion involves an ordered, structured system of beliefs (Hood, Hill, & Williamson, 2005; Iannaccone, 2004). Saroglou (2001) also found religiosity to be associated with agreeableness ( $r = .20, p < .001$ , p. 21). This finding is supported by Saucier and Skrzypińska (2006), who found that religious individuals were pro-socially oriented with high concern for others. These findings coincide with Zinnbauer's (1999) notion that religious individuals may seek social outlets through their religious affiliations.

Saroglou (2001) found that religious fundamentalism showed a small negative correlation with openness to experience ( $r = -.14, p < .01$ , p. 21). He stated that traditional fundamental religious beliefs were often centered on the importance of God, religion, and an organized system of rituals and guided beliefs. This is consistent with Saucier and Skrzypińska's (2006) findings that religiousness is associated with authoritarianism and that religion-oriented individuals showed more reliance on "tradition-hallowed sources of authority" (p. 1285). Furthermore, Saucier and Skrzypińska found those high on tradition-oriented religiousness to be low on openness to experience ( $r = -.26, p < .001$ , p. 1281). These findings imply that more religious individuals prefer the structured

guidelines of an institutionalized religious creed, as opposed to being open to various points of view or systems of belief.

Conversely, Saucier and Skrzypińska (2006) found more spiritual individuals to be less socially oriented and more individualistic. Individuals who scored higher on subjective spirituality were found to score higher on openness to experience. As Wink et al. (2007) pointed out, individuals high on openness were more likely to question authority and be open to more diverse systems of belief. These findings imply that, unlike more conscientious individuals who tend to adhere to organized religion, open individuals tend to seek their own spiritual paths and be open to the influence of a variety of religious or spiritual views.

Wink et al. (2007) longitudinally examined social influences on religiousness and spirituality from childhood to adulthood and found that as conscientious children became adults, they tended to adhere to the religious values of their parents. On the other hand, these researchers found that children who showed more openness tended to seek their own individual spiritual beliefs, regardless of childhood social influence. To sum, more conscientious individuals seek authority, leadership and guidance in their religious orientations, whereas more open individuals stray away from authoritarian guidance and seek their own individual spiritual paths.

### *Religiosity, Spirituality, and the Big Two*

In the past decade, researchers have focused on higher order factors of the Big Five personality factors (DeYoung, 2006; DeYoung, Peterson, & Higgins, 2002; Digman, 1997). Digman (1997) stated that although the Big Five factor model gives a reliable and valid basis for personality, it may not constitute the broadest, simplest personality

constructs possible. Digman's aim was to extract broader trait measures from the Big Five in hopes of providing a simpler, more explanatory model for individual personalities. A second-order factor analysis revealed two overlying personality factors; the first, *socialization*, consists of the traits agreeableness, emotional stability, and conscientiousness. Socialization is described as a broad social desirability factor, consisting of traits that drive the individual to adhere to socially acceptable behavior. Agreeableness, emotional stability, and conscientiousness are all positively viewed traits, especially in the societal sense. These traits foster social conformity, stability, and positive social behavior. Individuals high on this factor may be more easily socialized to socially acceptable models of belief and behavior.

The second factor, *personal growth*, consists of extraversion and openness. According to Digman, this factor represents a more personal, exploratory growth factor that involves striving to obtain experiential learning in life, even at the risk of adversity or denial of authority. Individuals high on this factor would theoretically be open to new experiences and seek to learn from such experiences, regardless of whether or not the information obtained conformed to societal norms.

DeYoung, Peterson, and Higgins (2002) replicated Digman's factor-analysis and labeled the two emergent factors *stability* and *plasticity*. Consistent with Digman's constructs, *stability* consists of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability. An individual who is emotionally stable would show positive affect, which would facilitate socially acceptable behavior. Furthermore, agreeableness would foster stable social relationships, and conscientiousness, a trait highly valued in our society, would foster achievement motivation. *Plasticity*, on the other hand, consists of extraversion and



openness to experience. According to DeYoung et al. (2002), these traits combined represent a drive to “explore and engage voluntarily with novelty” (p. 535). Extraversion has been associated with positive affect and excitement seeking. Openness to experience involves curiosity and imagination, and the tendency to explore novel ideas, behaviors, and feelings.

DeYoung et al. (2002) assessed the two higher-order personality factors (stability and plasticity) as predictors of conformity. Results showed that individuals high on stability (agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability) were more likely to conform, whereas individuals high on plasticity (openness and extraversion) were less likely to conform. These findings support the notion that stability encompasses traits associated with social desirability and a tendency to socialize, whereas plasticity encompasses traits associated with individual exploration and personal growth.

DeYoung et al. (2002) stated that stability and plasticity are inherent and complimentary personality factors both of which are necessary for individuals in an ever-changing environment. As social beings, people benefit from stability (i.e., higher levels of conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotionally stable). Benefits include improved abilities to maintain relationships and to maintain behavioral control in a social world. Of equal importance is plasticity (i.e., higher levels of openness and extraversion); benefits include increased ability to learn and adapt to a changing environment. As stated previously, the extent to which an individual is stable or plastic plays a role in determining the degree to which that individual will conform to certain social demands.

Within the study of religion and the relationship of personality to religious and spiritual tendencies, Streib, Hood, Keeler, Csöff and Silver (2008) proposed the titles

*traditionalism* and *transformation* for the two higher-order factors of personality (stability and plasticity, respectively). Theoretically, religious individuals would score higher on traditionalism, while spiritual individuals would score higher on transformation. Evidence for this disposition can be seen in previously cited research on religiosity, spirituality, and personality. Individuals who are more open to experience tend to be more spiritual (Saucier & Skrzypińska, 2006); individuals who are more conscientious and agreeable tended to be more religious (Saroglou, 2001).

Streib and his colleagues' (2008) suggest that individuals high on traditionalism (i.e. stability) would more strongly adhere to the tradition-oriented religious beliefs of their parents, other influential church members, etc. On the other hand, individuals high on transformation (i.e. plasticity) would have a tendency to view strictly tradition-oriented beliefs as constraining and limited. These individuals would seek other worldviews and systems of religious or spiritual belief in their personal spiritual quests. These notions are the basis for the current study: individuals higher on traditionalism might gravitate more toward religious beliefs, whereas individuals higher on transformation might seek to transform those beliefs. The current research aims to further clarify these relationships by examining relationships among religiosity, spirituality, mysticism, traditionalism, and transformation.

#### *Predictions and Current Study*

Theoretically, individuals high on traditionalism (i.e., stability), which is characterized by high levels of conscientiousness and agreeableness (Digman, 1997) adhere more strongly to religious systems of belief (i.e. tradition-oriented religion; Streib et al., 2008). See also DeYoung (2002) who suggests that, overall, traditionalism

(stability) refers to the tendency of individuals to adhere to socially accepted norms and to remain stable in those norms. Theoretically, individuals high on traditionalism tend to prefer the established, organized, structured, social nature of religion. Individuals high on traditionalism theoretically would score higher on *extrinsic* religiosity due to the notion that extrinsic religiosity refers to the seeking of external ends such as social belongingness and fellowship (Allport & Ross, 1967). Prediction One is that participants high on traditionalism and low on transformation will be more extrinsically religiously motivated than participants low on traditionalism and high on transformation.

Individuals high on transformation (i.e. plasticity), which is characterized by high levels of extraversion and openness to experience (Digman, 1997), tend to be more open to a variety of systems of religious or spiritual belief and prefer experiential spiritual growth and learning (Streib et al., 2008). As Wink et al. (2007) stated, spirituality usually entails a personal spiritual search focused on individual experience and the “freedom” of exploring spiritual aspects outside of any specific religious tradition (p. 1055). As spirituality is described as a more personal, experiential, transcendent construct focused on a relationship with a higher power (Zinnbauer et al., 1999), it seems that those higher on transformation and lower on traditionalism would be more spiritual. Prediction Two is that participants low on traditionalism and high on transformation will be more spiritual than participants high on traditionalism and low on transformation.

Due to the individual nature of spirituality, it is plausible that those who incorporate a religious creed into their personal worldviews (intrinsic religiosity) would be more spiritual. Prediction Three is that participants who are high on intrinsic religiosity and low on extrinsic religiosity will be more spiritual than those low on

intrinsic religiosity and high on extrinsic religiosity. Finally, as mysticism is focused largely on individual experience (Hood, 1975) and integral to spirituality (Spilka et al., 2003), Prediction Four is that participants who are high on spirituality and low on religiosity (i.e., both intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity) will report more occurrences of mystical experience than those who are low on spirituality and high on religiosity.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

Participants consisted of 852 students from an introductory psychology course at a small Southeastern university. The data from 69 of these participants were removed from the data set due to one or more of the following reasons: one or more incorrect responses on three lie scale items; failure to complete the questionnaire; or, otherwise invalidating the questionnaire (e.g., indicating more answers than there were questions). The final sample size was 783. Mean participant age was 18.9 years ( $SD = 2.52$ ). The majority of participants were female (62%,  $n = 485$ ; 38%,  $n = 298$  male). The majority were Caucasian (75%;  $n = 587$ ); 16% ( $n = 125$ ) were Black; 2.3% ( $n = 18$ ) were Latino; 1.4% ( $n = 11$ ) were Asian; 1.0% ( $n = 8$ ) were Middle Eastern; and 2.9% ( $n = 23$ ) declared their race/ethnicity as "Other." Very few participants (1.4%;  $n = 11$ ) either did not fill in the race/ethnicity category or gave an answer that did not correspond with any answer option.

### *Measures*

Participants completed standard demographic items followed by two items assessing level of spirituality and religiosity. The Likert-based answer scales for these items ranged from 0 (*not at all spiritual/religious*) to 4 (*very spiritual/religious*).

Next, participants were presented with a series of questionnaires. Please see Table 1 for a descriptive statistics and reliability estimates. A modified form of The *Mini-IPIP* (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006) was used to assess personality. The *Mini-IPIP* is a 20-item assessment of Goldberg's Big Five model of personality (Imagination/Intellect, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism). However, in the current study, the Imagination/Intellect subscale was eliminated and Goldberg's (2006) IPIP short-form of the NEO subscale for Openness to Experience ( $\alpha = .78$ ) was used instead. The four-item *Mini-IPIP* subscales for Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Emotional Stability received reliability estimates of  $\alpha = .71$ ,  $\alpha = .71$ ,  $\alpha = .76$ , and  $\alpha = .67$ , respectively.

The *Intrinsic/Extrinsic Religiosity Scale Revised (I/E-R)* (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989) consists of 14 items, 8 of which assess the individual's personal religious beliefs or the assimilation of a religious creed into one's personal belief system (*intrinsic; e.g., I try hard to live my life according to my religious beliefs*). The remaining 6 assess, in part, the social aspect of the individual's religious beliefs (*extrinsic; e.g., I go to church because it helps me to make friends*). The scale has received substantial use in the religion and personality literature and was shown to have acceptable reliability ratings in the current study ( $\alpha = .84$  for the intrinsic subscale and  $\alpha = .72$  for the extrinsic).

The *Spiritual Connection Questionnaire-48* (SCQ-48; Wheeler & Hyland, 2007) consists of 48 items assessing individuals' self-perceptions of their spiritual and transcendent connections. The scale assesses spiritual experience in terms of both religious and non-religious interpretations of spirituality. Examples of items include *I feel I have an inner spiritual strength, I feel there is a form of energy that binds all life together*, and *I never feel any special connection with a part of nature such as a flower, tree or mountain* (reversed). The SCQ-48 previously received test-retest reliability ratings of .99 (Wheeler & Hyland, 2007) and a Cronbach's Alpha reliability estimate of .95 in the current study. Six items (23, 27, 44, 18, 42, 46) from this scale were omitted as suggested by the scale's author, M.E. Hyland (personal communication, November 10, 2008), in order to allow comparison to another study examining spiritual beliefs in Eastern and Western populations, in which the same items were omitted.

The *M Scale* (Hood, 1975) assesses mystical experience with 32 items; each quality of mysticism is assessed by four items. The *Ego Quality* refers to the extent to which the individual experiences a loss of sense of self. The *Unifying Quality* refers to the experience of everything being perceived as 'one.' The *Inner Subjective Quality* refers to the subjective connectivity to all things, living or material. The *Temporal/Spatial Quality* refers to the extent to which the individual experiences a loss of space and time. The *Noetic Quality* refers to the individual's perception of the experience as a "source of valid knowledge" (p. 32). The *Ineffability Quality* refers to the indescribability of the experience, and the extent to which it is only meaningful to the experiencing individual. The *Positive Affect Quality* refers to the blissfulness associated with the experience. The *Religious Quality* refers to the individual's intrinsic religious perception of the

experience. Hood's *M Scale* has high validity and reliability estimate in the current study ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

Three items were inserted at random intervals throughout the questionnaire to detect people who may not have been paying attention or who may have been answering dishonestly. These items read "*Please bubble in answer 'E' for this item.*" Participants who answered these questions incorrectly were removed from the data set as described above.

## RESULTS

Traditionalism (stability) was computed by calculating the mean of the mean scores on conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability for each participant. Transformation (plasticity) was computed by calculating the mean of the mean scores on extraversion and openness to experience for each participant. Mean scores were computed for each participant on intrinsic religiosity, extrinsic religiosity, overall religiosity, spirituality, and mystical experience. Please see Tables 1 and 2 for means and standard deviations.

### *Prediction One*

Prediction One was that participants high on traditionalism and low on transformation would be more extrinsically religiously motivated than participants low on traditionalism and high on transformation. For Prediction One, a median split was performed in order to divide participants into groups high (above the median) or low (below the median) on both traditionalism and transformation. Once new variables were formed designating participants as high or low on traditionalism and transformation,

another variable was created to designate those participants who scored high on one and low on the other. There were then two final groups: those participants who were high on traditionalism and low on transformation, and those participants who were low on traditionalism and high on transformation.

An independent samples t-test was utilized to compare mean scores on extrinsic religiosity between those participants high on traditionalism and low on transformation and those participants low on traditionalism on and high on transformation. Participants high on traditionalism and low on transformation ( $M = 1.73, SD = .652$ ) were found to be significantly more extrinsically religiously motivated than participants low on traditionalism and high on transformation ( $M = 1.49, SD = .742$ ),  $t(333) = 3.2, p < .01$ . Participants high on traditionalism and low on transformation ( $M = 2.67, SD = .88$ ) were also found to be more intrinsically religiously motivated than participants low on traditionalism and high on transformation ( $M = 2.04, SD = .81$ ),  $t(333) = 6.59, p < .001$ .

#### *Prediction Two*

The same groups were utilized as in Prediction One. Again, an independent samples t-test was utilized; it was predicted that those participants low on traditionalism and high on transformation would be significantly more spiritual than those participants high on traditionalism and low on transformation. Participants low on traditionalism and high on transformation ( $M = 2.46, SD = .509$ ) were not found to be significantly more spiritual than participants high on traditionalism and low on transformation ( $M = 2.64, SD = .705$ ),  $t(333) = -2.52, p < .05$ .



*Prediction Three*

Prediction Three was that participants high on intrinsic religiosity and low on extrinsic religiosity would be significantly more spiritual than participants low on intrinsic religiosity and high on extrinsic religiosity. A median split was performed in order to divide participants into groups high (above the median) or low (below the median) on both intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Once new variables were formed designating participants as high or low on intrinsic or extrinsic religiosity, another variable was created to designate those participants who scored high on one and low on the other. There were then two final groups: those participants who were high on intrinsic and low on extrinsic religiosity, and those participants who were low on intrinsic and high on extrinsic religiosity. An independent samples t-test was utilized; participants high on intrinsic religiosity and low on extrinsic religiosity ( $M = 2.76, SD = .473$ ) were found to be more spiritual than participants low on intrinsic religiosity and high on extrinsic religiosity ( $M = 2.4, SD = .512$ ),  $t(268) = 6.04, p < .001$ .

*Prediction Four*

Prediction Four was that participants high on spirituality and low on religiosity would report significantly more mystical experiences than participants low on spirituality and high on religiosity. Again, participants were divided using a median split (above and below the median) into two groups: those participants high on spirituality and low on religiosity and those participants low on spirituality and high on religiosity. An independent samples t-test was utilized to compare mean mysticism scores between the two groups. Participants high on spirituality and low on religiosity ( $M = 2.69, SD = .604$ )

reported significantly more mystical experiences than participants low on spirituality and high on religiosity ( $M = 2.03$ ,  $SD = .411$ ),  $t(245) = 10.14$ ,  $p < .001$ .

## DISCUSSION

### *Prediction One*

Predictions were partially supported. Prediction One was supported; participants high on traditionalism and low on transformation were more extrinsically religiously motivated than participants low on traditionalism and high on transformation. In fact, those participants higher on traditionalism were more extrinsically *and* intrinsically religiously motivated than those participants higher on transformation. A plausible explanation centers on the notion that individuals high on traditionalism have a tendency to adhere strongly to traditional religious beliefs. Participants who scored higher on traditionalism tended to be more religious and spiritual in general. In other words, those who scored higher on traditionalism may have internalized the traditional religious beliefs of their families, friends, and religious peers, while also adhering to the more social, extrinsically oriented traditions (Allport & Ross, 1967).

This finding is consistent with previous research and theories that propose the stronger adherence to tradition of certain personality types (Digman, 1997). For example, as previously cited, Digman's factor analysis revealed a broad *socialization* factor (stability; conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability). Individuals high on this socialization factor would theoretically be more easily socialized to societal norms and behaviors. As previously stated, this socialization factor was labeled stability by DeYoung et al. (2002), and later traditionalism, in reference to religious adherence, by

Streib et al. (2008). The current finding that participants high on traditionalism and low on transformation were more extrinsically and intrinsically religious supports the notion that individuals with traditional personalities adhere more to traditional systems of religious beliefs.

### *Prediction Two*

Prediction Two was not supported; participants low on traditionalism and high on transformation were not found to be more spiritual than participants high on traditionalism and low on transformation. In fact, results showed the opposite: those participants high on traditionalism and low on transformation were significantly more spiritual than those low on traditionalism and high on transformation. It is unclear as to why those higher on transformation were not more spiritual than those higher on traditionalism. Streib et al. (2008) theorized that individuals begin with the religious traditions of their families and either orient to that tradition or transform that tradition. It may be that since this rather young sample ( $M = 18.9$  yrs) was taken from a highly religious, tradition-oriented area of the U.S., those participants higher on traditionalism were more religious *and* spiritual, whereas those participants higher on transformation were not necessarily religious *or* spiritual.

It also is important to keep in mind that the components of transformation are openness and extraversion. As these traits are both broad and expansive, it is plausible that even though an individual is high on transformation, he or she would not necessarily transform traditional *religious* beliefs into a more personal spiritual understanding. For example, he or she instead may transform traditional political beliefs, or traditional views of gender roles, or prejudicial beliefs. The point is that transformation is not semantically

specific to the concept of religiosity; transformation is really just another name for plasticity, which is simply a combination of personality traits that represent the tendency to learn and grow through experience. Transformation need not be predictive of religious transformation specifically.

*Prediction Three*

Prediction Three was supported; participants high on intrinsic religious motivation and low on extrinsic religious motivation were more spiritual than participants low on intrinsic and high on extrinsic motivation. According to Allport and Ross (1967), intrinsic religiosity entails the internalization of a religious creed into one's way of life. This notion implies a deeper, more individual understanding of the religious doctrine. Whereas extrinsic motivation refers to external ends such as social belongingness, guidance in problem solving or sanctified marriage, intrinsic motivation refers to the internalization of the religious beliefs into the individual's unique worldview and behavioral tendencies. Because the intrinsic aspect of religion seems to be much more individually focused, it is plausible that intrinsic religious motivation would entail a significantly more spiritual essence than extrinsic religious motivation. Previous definitions of spirituality describe the construct as individually based and focused on an individual's unique transcendent relationship with a higher power (Emblen, 1992; Zinnbauer et al., 1999). Further, as both Zinnbauer et al. (1997) and Schlehofer, Omoto, and Adelman (2008) found, people tend to associate the term spirituality with personal growth and transformation. The notion of a personalized search for the sacred (Hill et al., 2000), involving personal growth and transformation, certainly points to a construct that would be integral to an individual's worldview and sense of self in relation to that

worldview. Therefore, it is plausible that the internalization of a religious creed (intrinsic religiosity) into one's personal understanding of the world would be highly associated with spirituality.

*Prediction Four*

Prediction Four was supported; participants high on spirituality and low on religiosity reported more mystical experiences than participants low on spirituality and high on religiosity. This finding is consistent with the literature. It has been purported that a large basis for spirituality is mystical experience (Saucier & Skrzypińska, 2006; Spilka et al., 2003), and that both spirituality and mystical experience focus largely on individual, experiential, transcendent connections with some greater than human power (Hood, 1975; Spilka et al., 2003). However, it is has also been purported that mystical experience is also an important basis for religiosity (Hood, 1975; Hood, Morris, & Watson, 1993; Spilka et al., 2003). In the current study, whereas spirituality (both self-defined and as assessed by the *SCQ-48*) was strongly associated with mysticism, religiosity was not strongly associated with mysticism. This is a noteworthy finding in that mystical experience has been suggested as an experiential underpinning for the development of both spiritual and religious tendencies. However, current findings showed religiosity to be only weakly associated with mystical experience. This may be in accordance with the implications of Predictions One and Two, in that more tradition-oriented participants adhered socially to the traditional religious beliefs of friends, family, and religious peers, as opposed to basing their religiosity on mystical experiences of a connection with a higher power.

*Limitations*

In the current study, participants self-reported religious and spiritual tendencies, as well as mystical experiences. It is clear that throughout the literature, a wide variety of definitions for these concepts has been proposed. Furthermore, several studies have shown that in the vernacular, people often provide various interpretations for what these concepts represent (Schlehofer, Omoto, and Adelman, 2008; Zinnbauer et al., 1997). The point is, the definitions for these concepts are quite “fuzzy,” to use the words of Zinnbauer et al. (1997). Both empirical researchers and laypersons alike tend to have difficulty fleshing out precise definitions for religiosity, spirituality, and mysticism. Granted, much progress has been made by researchers like Ralph Hood (1975) in distinguishing mysticism as an experiential concept that may serve as the basis for religious and spiritual experience (Spilka et al., 2003). However, there still may be some overlap in the understanding of these concepts in the minds of many people.

The scales used in the current study to assess spirituality and mysticism (*SCQ-48*; Wheeler & Hyland, 2007; *M-Scale*; Hood, 1975) seemed to be assessing very similar constructs. Many items in both scales questioned the experiential, ineffable connection to a very subjectively defined transcendent being. The overlap of these constructs surely produced some of the variance explained in this study. It would be useful to perform second-order factor analysis on the constructs of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity, spirituality, and mysticism to see what possible higher-order factors emerge.

In addition to the limitation of construct overlap, the population sample may have caused limitations as well. As previously stated, the sample for this study was selected from university students in the “Bible belt” of the southeast United States. A large

proportion of the sample self-reported as religious and spiritual. Certainly religiosity is viewed in a very positive light in this region, and many participants may have responded positively based on the positive stereotypes associated with the idea of being religious. This may have contributed to some of the construct overlap mentioned previously in that participants may have responded positively to anything that seemed to have a religious connotation, whether religious, spiritual, or mystical. It would be useful to examine these constructs among a more diverse sample.

Another direction for future research may be to explore the influence of attitudes toward religiosity, spirituality, or mystical experience on the extent to which participants tend to self-report as religious, spiritual, or mystical. Participants could be compared in regards to religious upbringing and background. This type of study could shed light on the impact of religious upbringing and attitude toward religious, spiritual, or mystical experiences on individuals' perceptions of and tendencies toward the three constructs.

Aside from the few theoretical limitations, the current study certainly contributed some noteworthy findings to the field of personality and its relation to spiritual and religious tendencies. There seem to be some marked differences in the extent to which individuals pursue spiritual or religious goals based on personality variables. As personality theory continues to broaden with higher-level factors, etc. (DeYoung et al., 2002; Digman, 1997), there is much room for continued study of the interactions between personality variables and religious and spiritual tendencies.

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APPENDICES

## Appendix A

*Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Estimates*

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>α</i>
Spiritual Self Define	783	2.3	1.088	.00 – 4.00	N/A
Religious Self Define	783	2.2	1.168	.00 – 4.00	N/A
Conscientiousness	783	2.44	.66763	.50 – 4.00	.71
Agreeableness	783	3.04	.83049	.00 – 4.00	.71
Emotional Stability	783	3.34	.84208	.00 – 4.00	.67
Extraversion	783	2.54	.78492	.00 – 4.00	.76
Openness to Exp.	783	2.48	.74402	.00 – 4.00	.78
Traditionalism	783	2.6	.466	.50 - 3.83	N/A
Transformation	783	2.5	.547	.70 - 4.00	N/A
Spirituality	783	2.5	.644	.05 - 3.98	.95
Extrinsic Religiosity	783	1.6	.708	.00 - 3.67	.72
Intrinsic Religiosity	783	2.4	.867	.00 – 4.00	.84
Mysticism	783	2.3	.666	.13 - 3.97	.92

## Appendix B

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Comparison Groups

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
HiTradLoTrans ( <i>n</i> = 178)		
Trad	2.96	.248
Trans	2.09	.337
HiTransLoTrad ( <i>n</i> = 155)		
Trans	2.95	.306
Trad	2.17	.3
HiExtrinsicLoIntrinsic ( <i>n</i> = 134)		
Extrinsic	2.21	.341
Intrinsic	1.79	.361
HiIntrinsicLoExtrinsic ( <i>n</i> = 134)		
Intrinsic	1.79	.462
Extrinsic	1.12	.391
HiReligLoSpirit ( <i>n</i> = 116)		
Relig	2.54	.289
Spirit	2.19	.336
HiSpiritLoRelig ( <i>n</i> = 129)		
Spirit	2.98	.303
Relig	1.66	.389

Appendix C

Table 3. Correlations

		Trad	Trans	spiritual self-define	religious self-define	IntReligiosity	ExtReligiosity	Spirituality	Religiosity	Mysticism
Trad	Pearson Correlation	-								
	Sig. (2-tailed)									
	N	730								
Trans	Pearson Correlation	.080(*)	-							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032								
	N	723	774							
spiritual self-define	Pearson Correlation	.222(**)	.003	-						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.943							
	N	729	773	782						
religious self-define	Pearson Correlation	.180(**)	-.087(*)	.671(**)	-					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.015	.000						
	N	729	773	781	782					
IntReligiosity	Pearson Correlation	.247(**)	-.083(*)	.661(**)	.737(**)	-				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.021	.000	.000					
	N	730	774	782	782	783				
ExtReligiosity	Pearson Correlation	.080(*)	-.077(*)	.248(**)	.382(**)	.312(**)	-			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.033	.000	.000	.000				
	N	730	774	782	782	783	783			
Spirituality	Pearson Correlation	.273(**)	.139(**)	.584(**)	.349(**)	.471(**)	.253(**)	-		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000			
	N	730	774	782	782	783	783	783		
Religiosity	Pearson Correlation	.225(**)	-.098(**)	.613(**)	.732(**)	.898(**)	.697(**)	.472(**)	-	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.006	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
	N	730	774	782	782	783	783	783	783	
Mysticism	Pearson Correlation	.163(**)	.169(**)	.285(**)	.115(**)	.159(**)	.088(*)	.624(**)	.161(**)	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.001	.000	.014	.000	.000	
	N	730	774	782	782	783	783	783	783	783