A PSYCHOMETRIC EVALUATION OF THE
ASSESSMENT OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS
(ASPIRES) SCALE: SHORT FORM

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report was to examine the psychometric properties of the Assessment of Spirituality and Religious Sentiments (ASPIRES) scale self and observer version short forms. Samples of college undergraduates (229 women and 80 men) and community-based adults (249 women and 123 men) were included in this study. Results showed that the short forms were reliable, structurally valid, and possessed significant overlap with their long form parents. The results showed significant cross-observer convergence, providing evidence of discriminant validity. Scores on the short forms correlated significantly with a wide array of psychosocial outcomes, even after controlling for the predictive effects of personality. It was concluded that users can be confident that the short form versions validly represent the spiritual and religious constructs present in their parent versions.

KEY WORDS: ASPIRES, validity, reliability, short form

Spirituality and religiosity have received increased attention as important domains of study in the physical and social sciences. Such consideration is based on emerging research that continues to demonstrate the relation of spirituality and religiosity with salient outcomes such as well being, positive affect, and satisfaction with life (see Dy-Liacco, Kennedy, Parker, & Piedmont, 2005; Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003; Hill & Pargament, 2003; Idler et al., 2003; Piedmont, Ciarrocchi, Dy-Liacco, Mapa, & Williams, 2003). In other words, spirituality and religiosity contribute significantly and uniquely towards understanding and interpreting the human experience.

Although there are a myriad of scales that aim to measure spiritual and religious phenomena (e.g., Hill & Hood, 1999), few scales have developed much validity evidence for their utility (e.g., Gorsuch, 1984).

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Slater, Hall, and Edwards (2001) noted in their review of instruments that there exists a number of technical problems with these extant measures, including issues of ceiling effects, social desirability, and bias. Added to these problems are the additional limitations of a predominant Christian focus of many scales and the lack of much cross-cultural and interdenominational validity (Gorsuch & Miller, 1999; Piedmont & Leach, 2002). Nonetheless, the presence of such problems has not stunted research in this area.

In an effort to address many of these issues, the Assessment of Spirituality and Religious Sentiments (ASPIRES) scale was created. Piedmont (1999) proposed a systematic framework for scale development and assessment based on the Five Factor Model of personality (FFM; Goldberg, 1992). Within this approach, he conceptualized spirituality as a nondenominational motivational/trait construct. A motivational variable is a nonspecific affective force that drives, directs and selects behaviors. As an intrinsic source of motivation, spirituality is an endogenous quality that is relatively stable over time and impels individuals towards identifiable goals (Emmons, 1999). Consequently, spirituality would operate in ways consistent with other motivational traits, such as power, affiliation, and achievement. Such an approach also provides for a clear measurement model that is conducive to empirical analysis. Using this conceptual model, Piedmont has repeatedly shown that spirituality adds unique variance over and above the Five Factor Model in predicting salient psychosocial outcomes. These data support the contention that spirituality may represent a sixth factor of personality (Piedmont, 1999; 2001).

In defining spirituality as an individual’s efforts to construe a broad sense of personal meaning within an eschatological context, Piedmont (1999) developed the Spiritual Transcendence Scale (STS) to operationalize the construct. The items of the STS were analyzed within the context of the Five Factor Model of personality (FFM; Digman, 1990; McCrae & John, 1992) and were shown to constitute an independent individual-differences dimension. The STS manifested a single overall factor comprised of three correlated subscales: Prayer Fulfillment, a feeling of joy and contentment that results from personal encounters with a transcendent reality; Universality, a belief in the unitive nature of life; and Connectedness, a belief that one is part of a larger human reality that is trans-generational and trans-group. The structure of the STS was found to be stable over several samples of mostly college students (Piedmont, 1999; 2001), religiously diverse groups (Goodman, Britton,