

Notes About Spirit Map

In the following we explore a variety of topics beginning with what Spirit Map is – and is not - and ending with a discussion of the research possibilities that exist with our Spirit Map database. In between we discuss parallels with other well-established disciplines and where the 44 items in our survey come from; we discuss validity and reliability issues. In our work to arrive at the 44 survey items of Spirit Map we have “uncovered” what we are calling the underlying dimensions of spiritual well-being. We report briefly on this work.

In a slight, but in our minds pertinent, tangent we discuss the distinction New York Times columnist David Brooks makes between resume virtues and eulogy virtues and how that distinction applies to Spirit Map.

Key Deliverables and Survey Structure

Spirit Map is a survey-based instrument and analysis procedure that helps individuals and congregations find their inherent spiritual strengths and discover opportunities to deepen their sense of peace, compassion and joy. Spirit Map is faith neutral. While there are items in the survey that deal with spiritual issues, there is no reference to God or to any particular denomination. Survey content is discussed in more detail in the section below on content validity.

The procedure is not a predictive tool in the sense that the SAT attempts to predict college success. It is also not a screening tool in the sense that certain personality tests are used as part of an employment screening process.

The survey methodology and analytical steps, both at the individual level and congregational level, follow generally accepted and well-established marketing research practice to give three primary deliverables:

- Top five signature strengths (SS) as they pertain to the individual’s spiritual personality, and
- Top five key opportunities (KO) as they pertain to the individual’s spiritual growth and development.
- A quadrant map where each of the 44 items that make up the survey, including the SS and KO, is plotted in the two-dimensional self-assessment/importance space (self-assessment/importance defined below).

These deliverables are provided based on an analysis of the response patterns to two ratings about each of 44 items related to the domain of spiritual well-being. The two ratings provided by an individual about each of the 44 items are:

- Self-assessment rating: how true is this statement for you (1 – 10 scale where 1 = not at all true and 10 = totally true) and,

- Importance rating: how important is this statement to your spiritual well-being (1 – 10 scale where 1 = relatively least important to your spiritual well-being and 10 = relatively most important to your spiritual well-being)?

In addition to these responses, our survey asks respondents to provide an estimate of their overall spiritual well-being both now and in five years (optional). This question is asked following the individual's exposure to the 44 items. The question reads as follows:

Taking the items above as speaking, in aggregate, to your overall level of spiritual well-being, plus any other items we may have missed (tell us about them in Q4 below), and recognizing that some items will be more important to you than others: How would you rate your current level of overall spiritual well-being? (1 – 10)? How would you rate your overall spiritual well-being in five years (1 – 10 scale)?

Similarity with Social Science Research

Spirit Map Scales Have Parallels in Social Science Research

The scales used in Spirit Map for the Self-assessment and the Importance ratings are similar to rating scales commonly used in survey research in the social sciences.

Our phrasing and use of the overall spiritual well-being scale also has parallels in the social sciences. Social science assessments regularly use a self-defined, self-reported subjective overall assessment for constructs that are difficult to define objectively, leaving the construct's definition up to the individual respondent.

For example, Ed Diener from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in his Satisfaction with Life Scale questionnaire says "The Satisfaction with Life Scale was developed to assess satisfaction with people's lives as a whole. The scale does not assess satisfaction with specific life domains, such as health or finances, but allows subjects to integrate and weigh these domains in whatever way they choose."

In Social Science Research Overall Constructs Are Often Characterized by Specific Domains or Attributes

In the last paragraph it was mentioned that an overall construct like life satisfaction can be characterized by specific life domains like health and finances.

Here's another example of such a structure. Many reading this have probably been asked at some point to evaluate the satisfaction they have with their job. In addition to an overall, self-defined subjective rating of job satisfaction the survey no doubt included ratings of specific attributes such as salary, advancement opportunities, benefits, professional development opportunities, supervision, etc.

And, as in the case of overall life satisfaction cited above, the overall rating of job satisfaction allows subjects to integrate and weigh these specific domains or attributes in whatever way they choose to reflect the overall rating.

So here's the key point in terms of how Spirit Map thinks about spiritual well-being. In the same way that overall satisfaction with one's life or job is a function of the bundle of attributes that define the overall construct, Spirit Map views one's overall spiritual well-being to be a function of a specific bundle of attributes. To be precise, 44 attributes like: *I care deeply about the welfare of others; my life has meaning and purpose; I seek opportunities to learn and grow.* Attributes that respondents evaluate, weight, and integrate in whatever way they choose to come up with a rating of overall SM.

We discuss the evolution of these 44 items in more detail below.

In what might be a bit of oversimplification, we would point out the following parallel between Spirit Map and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction deals with one's professional life; Spirit Map deals with one's spiritual life. We return to this parallel in the section below titled: Resume Virtues vs. Eulogy Virtues.

Correlation Similarities of Overall Assessments with Defining Attributes

Spirit Map provides the same type of correlation metrics that we find in similarly structured marketing research studies.

In marketing research studies we often find that if we correlate the self-reported overall assessment of satisfaction with a product or service (e.g., an automobile) with evaluations on the set of attributes that define the product or service (in the case of an automobile these would be attributes like safety, styling, mpg, comfort, etc.) we will observe correlations that range from a high of 0.70 to a low of less than 0.20. These correlations, or functions of these correlations, are used to prioritize which attributes are key "correlates of overall satisfaction".

When we look at the correlations between the overall assessment of spiritual well-being in Spirit Map and evaluations on the defining set of attributes, (attributes like: *I seek opportunities to learn and grow; My life has meaning and purpose; I care deeply about the welfare of others,* etc.) we find correlations that range from highs of approximately 0.70 to lows of less than 0.20; in other words very much in line with what we find in marketing research studies.

Validity

In the next three sections we discuss validity issues related to Spirit Map. We consider three primary validity types: content validity; construct validity; and criterion validity – which has two sub-types: predictive and concurrent.

The general take-away is that establishing across-the-board validity is complicated. Regarding content validity we make the case that we have established a high degree of this type of validity for Spirit Map for our target market. Regarding construct validity we discuss what it would take – if we had the time and resources - to establish this for our overall measure of spiritual well-being and then suggest that for the individual ratings of importance and self-assessment construct validity is less of an issue. Establishing criterion validity would require that there exist a valid, external measure of overall spiritual well-being. Such a measure, to our knowledge, does not exist - see our discussion of this issue in the Construct Validity section below.

Content Validity

Content validity refers to how accurately an assessment or measurement tool taps into the various aspects of the specific construct in question. Content validity is most often measured by relying on the knowledge of people who are familiar with the construct being measured, so-called subject-matter experts (SME). An element of subjectivity exists in relation to determining content validity that requires a degree of agreement about what a particular social construct such as spiritual well-being represents.

The current set of 44 items in the Spirit Map survey started as a set of 56 items. We discuss this reduction from 56 to 44 items in the section below titled “Why These 44 Items and the Underlying Dimensions of spiritual well-being”. The original 56 item set was primarily the result of thinking, writing, and research by three well-established and highly regarded Unitarian Universalist ministers reflecting a professional lifetime dedicated to helping individuals and congregations enhance their individual and collective spiritual growth, transformation, and maturity. Their familiarity with the domain of spiritual well-being establishes them as subject matter experts and provides a reasonable level of confidence that the 44 identified items covers a representative sample of this domain as required to establish content validity for Unitarian Universalists, others with a progressive religious orientation, and the large and growing population of individuals who identify themselves as spiritual but not religious.

Another way to assess content validity is to look at how well the 44 items of Spirit Map compare to spiritual domains delineated in the literature. One well researched and highly regarded spirituality model by Gomez¹ and Fisher² is based on the four domains advanced by the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (NICA). These domains are: personal (relation with self), communal (relation with others), environmental (relation with the environment), and transcendental (relation with

¹ Gomez R, Fisher JW. Domains of spiritual well-being and development and validation of the spiritual well-being questionnaire. *Personality and Individual Differences*. 2003;35:1975–1991

² Meezenbroek E et al. Measuring Spirituality as a Universal Human Experience: A Review of Ten Spirituality Questionnaires. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 2010.

some-thing or some-One beyond the human level). These domains are represented by 20 subscales, five for each of the four domains. We have a short working paper (available on request) that looks at the relationship between the 44 Spirit Map attributes and the 20 subscales discussed in the Gomez and Fisher paper. Bottom line there is good agreement. Two examples: one of their Communal scales deals with “love of other people” - a Spirit Map scale deals with “caring deeply about the welfare of others”; one of their Personal scales deals with “self-awareness” - Spirit Map has a “self-awareness” scale.

We note that Spirit Map does not have a transcendental domain in the sense that it mentions God, Creator, or prayer (as used by Gomez/Fisher for the transcendental subscales) substituting instead items that define a spiritual domain - items like “I feel part of something larger than myself”. This overall agreement supports the content validity of Spirit Map.

Construct Validity

Construct validity in the case of Spirit Map has to do with whether what we are measuring does in fact measure what is intended: spiritual well-being. External measures of overall spiritual well-being are hard to come by at this stage of development. It would be great if we had peer assessments (from friends/family members) of the spiritual well-being for a given individual. This would allow us to calculate correlations of our overall measure of spiritual well-being, as well as our domain items, with these peer measures across a sample of individuals. At this point in time we do not have such data. Collecting such data among seminary students or members of a given congregation, for example, would allow us to look at this in the future. The same applies to congregations: it would be great if we had assessments of the spiritual well-being of a given congregation, say, by “trained denominational” raters. We don’t at this time.

Nor does there exist any generally accepted external, objective measure of spiritual well-being (something like a clinical assessment of depression) for a given individual. It is doubtful that any such measure could exist for spiritual well-being in the same sense that there is no external, objective measure for “life satisfaction”.

The following quote speaks to the probably impossible task of finding a universally agreed upon definition of spirituality. It is from a paper titled, “*Measuring Spirituality as a Universal Human Experience: A Review of Spirituality Questionnaires*” published in 2010 in the peer reviewed Journal of Religion and Health by six academic researchers in the Netherlands.

“Spirituality is a complex multidimensional concept (Cook 2004; Hill et al. 2000; George et al. 2000; Moberg 2002). The concept defies clear-cut boundaries, which also applies to other latent constructs that are often used, such as character, well-being and health (Miller and Thoresen 2003)...It seems almost impossible to find a

description with which the majority of people would agree. Zinnbauer³ et al. (1999) described five studies in which various groups of people were asked to define spirituality. They concluded that differences in the responses of the participants outweighed by far the similarities. McSherry and Cash (2004) even stated that we should accept that the word 'spirituality' has different meanings."

Studies with subjective measures of life satisfaction have shown that they are predictive of things like future health and longevity. Subjective measures of happiness have been shown to correlate with income (at least up to a point). These kinds of correlations support the validity of these constructs. It is not clear at this point that correlations of these kinds are relevant for a construct like spiritual well-being (for example would we necessarily expect or want to see a high correlation of spiritual well-being with income), but as we collect more Spirit Map data we will be in a position to take a look.⁴

When it comes to the individual self-assessment and importance ratings of Spirit Map the notion of construct validity is a less pressing issue. These 88 individual attribute ratings - self-assessment (44 ratings) and importance (44 ratings) - are idiographic⁵ evaluations. They are based on an individual's personal life journey and life experiences; they uniquely belong to the individual. For example, whether one attribute is relatively more importance than another in the spiritual life of an individual at a given point in time is not subject to any objective external standard...it's for the individual to say. Whether ratings of these attributes correlate with external measures is not relevant.

Criterion Validity (Predictive and Concurrent)

Evidence for criterion validity involves the correlation between a test measure and a criterion variable already held to be valid. For example, employee selection tests are often validated against measures of job performance (the criterion), and IQ tests are often validated against measures of academic performance (the criterion). If the test data and criterion data are collected at the same time, this is referred to as concurrent validity evidence. If the test data are collected first in order to predict criterion data collected at a later point in time, then this is referred to as predictive validity evidence.

In the case of Spirit Map establishing criterion validity would require a significant correlation between our overall measure of spiritual well-being and a criterion

³ Zinnbauer BJ, Pargament KI, Scott AB. The emerging meanings of religiousness and spirituality: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Personality*. 1999.

⁴ For additional background on this discussion, see "Theory and Validity of Life Satisfaction Scales", Diener, Inglehart, and Tay, May 2012, Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012.

⁵ In [psychology](#), **idiographic** describes the study of the individual, who is seen as a unique agent with a unique life history, with properties setting him/her apart from other individuals.

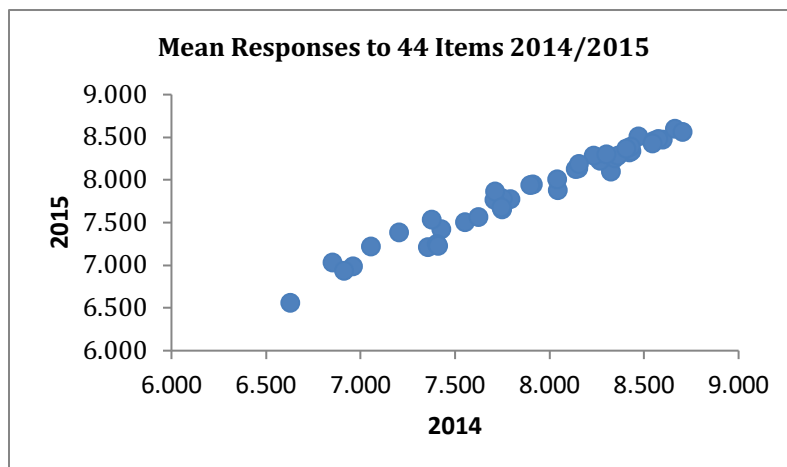
variable already held to be valid as a measure of overall spiritual well-being. As we mentioned above when discussing construct validity such a measure does not exist.

What Can We Say About Reliability?

One property we would like to see in a test instrument is that if it is administered at time 1 and again at time 2, and there is no reason to expect significant changes in the ratings of the items being measured during this time interval (e.g., no “clinical” intervention), that the ratings at time 2 will not have changed significantly from the ratings at time 1. In other words there is test-retest reliability.

Normally reliability is established at the individual respondent level. Do Spirit Map attribute ratings for individuals at time 1 have a high correlation with attribute ratings for the same individuals at time 2? We have administered Spirit Map at two different points in time – a year apart – in one congregation. However these administrations have necessarily been done anonymously precluding the ability to look test-retest correlations across individuals. While not ideal, we can look at the correlation of self-assessment mean scores for the two points in time⁶.

This correlation suggests very similar, stable, readings for the 44 survey items over the two time periods: 0.985 (n = 343 in 2014 and n = 261 in 2015). The maximum correlation between two variables is 1.000.



⁶ In these congregational studies we used a derived measure of importance based on the item correlations with the overall measure of spiritual well-being. In our work with individuals we use a direct rating of importance as described in the first section of this paper (referred to as a self-explicated measure of importance). For the derived importance measures the correlation of mean scores across the 44 items in the two administrations of the survey is 0.764.

Why These 44 Items and the Underlying Dimensions of Spiritual Well-Being

The reduction from 56 to 44 items mentioned above in the section on content validity is primarily the result of factor analytic work with the original 56 items on data collected from four Unitarian Universalist congregations in 2013 (n = 503). Factor analysis bundles together items that define a common underlying construct or factor. For example, the attributes *I care deeply about the welfare of others* and *I give to others fully and generously* are part of the same bundle.

Items in a given bundle are to some degree measuring the same thing. This redundancy means that we could consider eliminating certain items highly redundant with other items.

In addition to item redundancies, we looked at how individual item self-assessments correlated with the assessment of overall spiritual well-being. We eliminated only items with (1) a high degree of redundancy with other items as determined by the factor analysis and (2) had a relatively low correlation with overall spiritual well-being. Using this procedure we eliminated 12 of the original set of 56 items to arrive at the final set of 44.

Importantly, the factor analytic work not only helped in reducing the number of individual items it also yielded ten factors which we call the Underlying Dimensions of spiritual well-being. Each factor is defined by a subset of the 44 individual items. By averaging the (weighted) self-assessment ratings of the subset of individual items that define each of the underlying dimensions we can report 10 summary scores – one for each underlying dimension. The summary scores represent the view from 30,000 feet in contrast to the ground level view provided by the 44 individual scores. These summary measures are useful both as current - at this time - evaluations and for tracking self-assessment over time.

The names we have assigned to these underlying dimensions are in the table below. It is important to say that providing names for these dimensions or factors is an art, not a science.

When ratings for individual items are combined to form a composite score on an underlying dimension they need to exhibit internal consistency. Internal consistency reliability reflects the extent to which a set of items is measuring the same construct. It is most often calculated using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. A coefficient alpha level of 0.70 or higher (1.0 is the max) is considered acceptable.

Cronbach's alpha scores for our 10 underlying dimensions range from a high of greater than 0.90 to a low of 0.69, with most metrics well above 0.70.

Underlying Dimension	Cronbach's α
Cares for others	0.91

Actively develops and integrates spirituality in their life	0.87
Connects to a sense of wonder	0.80
Thinks symbolically or metaphorically	0.75
Develops their self-awareness	0.77
A wise decision maker who can deal w/ a variety of situations and outcomes	0.86
Opens themselves to a wider connection they're unable to control	0.73
Pursues understanding and growth	0.69
Develops dedication to purpose	0.74
Develops clear boundaries to inform intentional action	0.79

Resume Virtues vs. Eulogy Virtues: Comparison Between Strengths Finder and Spirit Map

David Brooks in a recent NYT column (“The Moral Bucket List”, April 11, 2015 and in his most recent book The Path to Character) discusses eulogy virtues (how we want to be remembered) and resume virtues (important for competition with others): *“It occurred to me that there were two sets of virtues, the résumé virtues and the eulogy virtues. The résumé virtues are the skills you bring to the marketplace. The eulogy virtues are the ones that are talked about at your funeral — whether you were kind, brave, honest or faithful. Were you capable of deep love? We all know that the eulogy virtues are more important than the résumé ones. But our culture and our educational systems spend more time teaching the skills and strategies you need for career success than the qualities you need to radiate that sort of inner light. Many of us are clearer on how to build an external career than on how to build inner character.”*

A popular survey and analysis tool called Strengths Finder (from Gallup) deals with resume virtues. Spirit Map deals with eulogy-like virtues. Spirit Map, in addition to identifying your Signature (Eulogy) Strengths – to parallel the (Resume) Strengths of Strength Finder - also identifies those areas – Key Opportunities – that offer opportunities for spiritual growth and development.

The Key Opportunities identified by Spirit Map can help close the “...humiliating gap (that) opens between your actual self and your desired self...” that Brooks mentions at the end of this quote from the above cited NYT article:

“But if you live for external achievement, years pass and the deepest parts of you go unexplored and unstructured. You lack a moral vocabulary. It is easy to slip into a self-satisfied moral mediocrity. You grade yourself on a forgiving curve. You figure as long as you are not obviously hurting anybody and people seem to like you, you must be O.K. But you live with an unconscious boredom, separated from the deepest meaning of life

and the highest moral joys. Gradually, a humiliating gap opens between your actual self and your desired self, between you and those incandescent souls you sometimes meet”.

Strategic Guidance at the Congregation Level

When dealing with congregational level results we can draw potentially important parallels with results from consumer satisfaction studies. As stated above our primary deliverables are: Signature Strengths, Key Opportunities, and the quadrant map where each of the 44 items is plotted in the two-dimensional self-assessment/importance space. These deliverables are similar to those often provided from satisfaction research in the consumer area where rating data is averaged across study participants to deliver: product/service strengths, opportunities, and a quadrant map of attributes.

In the commercial world these deliverables are often used to guide strategic product/service improvement initiatives and/or communication initiatives. In the same way, congregations can use the deliverables from Spirit Map to guide the development of programs, activities and initiatives that best leverage the congregation’s spiritual strengths to work on the congregation’s opportunities.

Congregational communications and outreach to potential members can also focus on promoting the congregation’s signature strengths, its “spiritual brand.”

Continuing and Future Research and Development Opportunities

Spirit Map offers a rich set of data. There are four major opportunities for continuing and future research and development.

First, as we add more cases to our database it will make sense to rerun our factor analysis to tighten the structure and our understanding of the underlying dimensions of spiritual well-being. We see these underlying dimensions offering the opportunity to help in developing higher-level themes for key opportunities and signature strengths. We discuss this in more detail as the fourth area below for development.

Second, we’d like to study what items in our set of 44 differentiates between people who self-identify their overall level of spiritual well-being as higher or lower on the 10-point scale so that we can help organizations design initiatives that help people see themselves as more spiritually mature. We’d study this by grouping people into categories. For example, those responding

- 9 or 10 = very high spiritual well-being
- 7 or 8 = high
- 5 or 6 = moderate

- 1 through 4 = low spiritual well-being

We can then look at which of the 44 items most discriminate among the categories providing further insight into what drives spiritual well-being. To date we have looked at this in a sort of brute force way calculating mean scores for each of 44 items for respondents in each of the four categories and looking for statistically different item means between categories. A more formal approach would involve using a data mining procedure like CART (Classification And Regression Trees) to search for discriminating items. This is an analysis we look forward to doing.

Third, at the point in time when we have collected self-explicated importance ratings for each of the 44 items as described in the first section above from approximately 400 – 500 individual respondents, we will be in a position to perform a statistical procedure called cluster analysis to see if we can identify, say, four to six meaningful segments or “Spirituality Types” (we say four to six segments because that has been our typical result in marketing research studies). Such segments or types would differ from one another in terms of what respondents in a given segment thought were particularly important (or unimportant) to them. For example one segment or type may indicate that items like *“seeking opportunities to learn and grow”*, *“I am curious to learn more about how the world around me works”*, and *“I think about my place in the universe”* are particularly important to them and other items much less important. Another segment or type may find that items like *“I seek harmony with others”*, *“I give to others fully and generously”*, and *“I care deeply about the welfare of others”* are particularly important to them and other items less important. The first segment/type might be labeled the “Cognitive Type”, the second segment/type the “Caring Type”. Our analysis would also allow us to estimate the size of each segment/type, e.g. Cognitive Types are 15% of the population; Caring Types are 27%. This kind of segmentation analysis is a routine marketing research activity.

A fourth area to study is the extent to which the underlying dimensions of spiritual well-being associated with an individual’s or congregation’s Signature Strengths and Key Opportunities overlap. If they don’t overlap, and preliminary analysis suggests they tend not to, we’d explore the degree to which people find it useful to have their SS and KO characterized in terms of higher-level themes represented by our underlying dimensions of spiritual well-being.