

Role of Sociocultural Aspects in the Relationship between Spirituality and Subjective Well-Being

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Abstract

In spite of an increasing appeal for the role of spirituality in positive psychology and mental health, there is a dearth of empirical research investigating the mechanisms played by the sociocultural and ethnic dimensions in linking spirituality and mental health. This project, therefore, investigated the mediating role of individualism and collectivism, and the moderating role of ethnic identity in the relationship between spirituality and subjective well-being as measured by positive affect and satisfaction with life. Mediation analyses indicated significant mediational effects and suggested that collectivism emerged as a stronger mediator than individualism. Moderation analyses indicated that the impact of spirituality on positive affect is greatest for those high on ethnic identity. These results are discussed as having significant implications for practical work, research in psychology of spirituality and culture, and social psychology.

Keywords: spirituality; individualism; collectivism; ethnic identity; satisfaction with life; positive affect

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Kluckhohn and Murray's (1953) tripartite model describes human beings as simultaneously like all others (universal), like some others (cultural), and like no other (individual). These three dimensions taken together help us to examine our universal humanness, our cultural embeddedness, and our individual uniqueness (Augsburger, 1986; Kluckhohn & Murray, 1953; Leong, 1996). The assumption that human beings as simultaneously like all others represents the essential humanness of people (Augsburger, 1986; Kluckhohn & Murray, 1953), which is fundamental for experiencing spirituality as a universal dimension of human life (Ortiz, Villereal, & Engel, 2000). Yet, human beings are relational (Cooper-White, 2007), because they are born into and formed by the cultural and ethnic community (Augsburger, 1986), and they also participate in and co-construct the cultures in which they are embedded (Cooper-White, 2007). Finally, every individual human being is unique (Cooper-White, 2007), with a distinctive developmental sequence, experience, life-style, and personality (Augsburger, 1986).

Although this tripartite model has been existing for more than a half-century, many mainstream psychological paradigms and counseling theories seem to focus primarily on unique and idiographic aspects and thus neglect the culturally and ethnically defined expectations or universally accepted natural laws. On the other side, scholars that promote theories of spirituality appear to focus on nomothetic aspects – common experiences or similar characteristics of all people and thus neglect the individual peculiarities in a given sociocultural and ethnic context. Augsburger (1986) maintained that all three dimensions should inform the work of a culturally effective and ethnically sensitive helper. He said that “only when the universal is clearly understood can the cultural be seen distinctly and the individual traits respected fully; only when the person is prized in her or his uniqueness can the cultural matrix be seen clearly and the universal frame be assessed accurately” (p. 49).

Based on this valuable tripartite model and believing that all three dimensions somehow are interconnected in human functioning, I tried to examine the human universal of spirituality’s relation to subjective well-being (positive affect and satisfaction with life) as mediated by sociocultural values of individualism and collectivism and moderated by ethnic identity.

Universal Spirituality and its Relation to Subjective Well-Being

There appears to be a growing consensus among some social scientists that the spirituality of humanity is an ontologically existent phenomenon (Moberg, 2002), an innate quality (Miller, Weissman, Gur, & Adams, 2001), through which human beings possess a drive to spirituality in order to establish a connection with a larger and sacred transcendental reality (Piedmont & Leach, 2002). In fact, Baumeister (2002) construed spirituality as the highest level of motivation that arises out of an innate and universal human quality behind humankind's search for meaning and well-being in life.

Various indices of this innate spirituality are said to be robustly associated with positive outcomes of well-being and happiness (see Diener, 2000; Ellison & Fan, 2008; Greenfield, Vaillant, & Marks, 2009; Miller & Thoresen, 2003; Zullig, Ward, & Horn, 2006). For instance, studies have supported that spirituality was positively associated with longevity and satisfaction, the changes in spiritual well-being were related to changes in life satisfaction (Kim, Heinemann, Bode, Sliwa, & King, 2000; Waldron-Perrine et al., 2011), and intrinsic spirituality accounted for significant variance in positive affect (Hall, Oates, Anderson, & Willingham, 2011).

To account for the observed results between spirituality and health relationships, researchers have typically identified five causal mechanisms by which spiritual aspects might lead to better health and well-being (Oman & Thoresen, 2002; Oman & Thoresen, 2005). The five mechanisms are that spirituality may (a) foster mental health and positive psychological states; (b) encourage positive health behaviors; (c) lead to more effective coping orientations; (d) foster stronger social networks; and (e) may also lead to better health through superempirical mechanisms. For example, spirituality has shown strong associations with life satisfaction and other adaptive outcomes through mechanisms that included increased social support and coping skills (Diener, Tay, & Myers, 2011; George, Ellison, & Larson, 2002). In a study with older adults, an individual’s level of perceived control acted as a mediator of the relationship between spirituality and well-being (Jackson & Bergeman, 2011). Steger and Frazier (2005) found in samples of college students that meaning in life mediated the relation between spirituality and life satisfaction.

Yet, it has also been indicated that the contexts in which spiritual involvement takes place are dynamic, multicultural and heterogeneous (Chatters, 2000), and the benefits of the relationship between spirituality and well-being depend on the cultural characteristics of the society and ethnic identity of the individuals (see Diener, Tay, et al., 2011; Jagodzinski, 2010). For instance, people are happiest when the degree of fit between an individual’s religiosity and society is higher (Diener, Tay, et al., 2011), and

extroverts are happier if they live in more extroverted environments (Fulmer et al., 2010). In other words, cultural and ethnic congruence predicts subjective well-being (Suh, 2002).

Therefore, it appears that there is a need to consider the fact that human's evolved abilities and behavioral plasticity are much more significant than purportedly universal traits (Fish, 2011), and to acknowledge the role of sociocultural and ethnic aspects in the relation of spirituality to various psychological states of individuals (APA, 2003; Crook-Lyon, et al., 2012), including subjective well-being. As many sociocultural theorists express skepticism about the existence of important cross-cultural and interethnic etic generalizations, it is necessary to pursue an emic strategy in understanding sociocultural and ethnic aspects from within (Fish, 2011). Some of the sociocultural aspects worth considering are individualism and collectivism, and ethnic identity.

Sociocultural Aspect of Individualism and Collectivism

While mainstream psychologists have paid considerable attention to the role of idiosyncrasies in developing personal uniqueness, the ways in which social and cultural patterns transform themselves into the specific behavior of individuals through "socialization" process are rarely discussed. People learn to be like others in their society by growing up among them and imbibing their cultural values. Therefore, any discussion of social and cultural factors in research must concern itself with the individual and sociocultural interface in order to develop a valid conceptual framework (Fish, 2011).

One pair of such sociocultural aspects are individualism and collectivism. Individualism emphasizes personal responsibility, autonomy, freedom of choice, emotional independence, and individual initiative. Collectivism emphasizes emotional dependence, duties and obligations, and group solidarity (Hofstede, 1980; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002). Given these concepts of individualism and collectivism, it can be said that individualism implies attainment of one's personal goals as an important source of well-being, whereas collectivism implies restraining emotions and fulfilling social roles in order to experience well-being (Oyserman et al., 2002).

The sociocultural aspects of individualism and collectivism have been extensively used to investigate social behaviors, family dynamics, leadership styles, communication patterns, and self-construal (see LeFebvre & Franke, 2013; Oyserman et al., 2002; Taras, Kirkman, & Steel, 2010). There are also studies that indicated the significant relations between spirituality and individualism-collectivism (Dy-Liacco, Piedmont, et al., 2009; Cukur, de Guzman, & Carlo, 2004). The dimensions of individualism and collectivism also explained the differences in subjective well-being (see Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Suh & Oishi, 2002). However, there appears to be no clear evidence of employing individualism and collectivism as useful explanatory mechanisms of the relationship between universal aspect of spirituality and individual traits of subjective well-being. Further, Fiske (2002) said that individualism and collectivism are not identified culture per se, but are mediators of the effects of predictive variables on outcomes. Therefore, this research attempted to investigate the mediating role of individualism and collectivism in the relationship between spirituality and subjective well-being.

Sociocultural Aspect of Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is derived from a sense of belonging to a group, culture or a particular setting. It refers to the process of how individuals understand and interpret their ethnicity and their degree of identification with their ethnic group (Helms, 2007; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Various studies have shown significant relations between ethnic identity and subjective well-being. Evolved ethnic identity statuses are associated with high levels of self-esteem and psychological adjustment (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Spencer, Icard, Harachi, Catalano, & Oxford, 2000). Ethnic identity and cultural racism were significant predictors of

quality of life for immigrants (Utsey, Chae, Brown, & Kelly, 2002), and ethnic identity achievement had a significant correlation with well-being among Chinese-Americans (Yip & Fuligni, 2002).

Only a few studies directly examined the relationship between ethnic identity and spirituality. For instance, Chae, Kelly, Brown, and Borden (2004) examined the relationship between ethnic identity, spirituality means and spirituality ends among different ethnic college students. A multivariate analysis of variance indicated significant group differences. Follow-up univariate tests showed African Americans had higher scores than White Americans on ethnic identity and there were no differences between Latino and Asian American participants. Another study by Dubow, Pargament, Boxer, and Tarakeshwar (2000) with Jewish adolescents indicated that participants with higher ethnic identity scores were more likely to rely on their spiritual faith as a coping source. These various reports suggest that spirituality serves to preserve a connection to individuals' ethnic background (Juang & Syed, 2008). Therefore, pursuing a research to investigate how ethnic identity and spirituality influence each other in affecting subjective well-being is worthy of consideration.

Research Hypotheses

On the one hand, scholars in the psychology of spirituality consider spirituality as the innate and universal human quality behind humankind's search for meaning and well-being in life. On the other hand, sociocultural psychologists perceive spirituality as dynamic and heterogeneous, taking place in a specific sociocultural and ethnic context. Based on these arguments, I attempted to test the hypothesis that the benefits of the relationship between spirituality and well-being depend on the cultural and ethnic characteristics of the society. Specifically, after controlling for important demographics, I tested the following hypotheses in this study.

1. The significant positive relationship between spirituality and positive affect, and between spirituality and satisfaction with life, would be significantly and negatively mediated by the sociocultural aspect of individualism.
2. The significant positive relationship between spirituality and positive affect, and between spirituality and satisfaction with life, would be significantly and positively mediated by the sociocultural aspect of collectivism.
3. There would be a significant interaction effect of ethnic identity and spirituality on positive affect and satisfaction with life, such that the subjects would experience greater positive affect and satisfaction with life at higher levels of spirituality and ethnic identity.

Method

Procedure and Participants

This research design was reviewed and approved by an Internal Review Board of a recognized educational institution in the Eastern part of the United States. Data were collected through PsychData design. A total of 663 subjects responded to the survey. Data screening indicated 26 cases missing values on most of the study variables and thus were not included in the analysis, reducing the final sample to 637. As suggested by Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003), randomly missing values on certain variables were replaced by the respective mean scores.

The sample ($N = 637$) was almost evenly distributed between males ($n = 284$; 44.6%) and females ($n = 353$; 55.4%). Average age of the sample was 50, with highest number of participants in the age group between 46 and 55 ($n = 165$; 25.9%), followed by between 56 and 65 ($n = 155$; 24.3%). The majority of the participants were married ($n = 473$; 74.3%), Christians ($n = 532$; 83.5%), and had a Master's degree or above ($n = 381$; 59.8%).

Measures

Researchers in the psychology of religion and spirituality have indicated that for majority of people, religiosity and spirituality represent related rather than two independently polarized constructs (see Hill et al., 2000; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). Hence, in this study, I approached religiosity and spirituality as related and overlapping constructs, measured by Intrinsic Religious Motivation Scale and Spiritual Transcendence Scale, respectively.

Intrinsic Religious Motivation Scale (IRMS). Hoge (1972) developed IRMS with 10 items, such as “My faith involves all of my life” and “My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life,” measured on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 4 = *strongly agree*). Hoge reported reliability coefficient for IRMS as .90.

Spiritual Transcendence Scale (STS). STS consists of 23 items, answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Sample items include “I do not feel a connection to some larger Being or Reality” and “I feel that on a higher level all of us share a common bond.” Alpha reliability for STS is .93 (Piedmont, 2010).

Positive Affect (PA). Positive affect was assessed by the 10-item Positive Affects subscale of PANAS scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The scale ratings range from 1 (*very slightly or not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*), with high score indicating high PA (e.g., attentive, interested, alert, enthusiastic). The alpha reliabilities for PA ranged from .86 to .90.

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). It is a 5-item scale, measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Sample item includes “In most ways my life is close to my ideal.” The SWLS has a reliability coefficient of .87 (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).

Individualism and Collectivism. The sociocultural aspects of Individualism and Collectivism were measured by a 16-item instrument, rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include “I’d rather depend on myself than others” (Individualism), and “I feel good when I cooperate with others” (Collectivism). The reliabilities ranged from .80 to .82 (Traindis & Gelfand, 1998).

Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS). Umana-Taylor, Yazedjian, and Bamaca-Gomez (2004) developed a 17-item Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS), scored on a 4-point Likert scale, with end points of 1 (*does not describe me at all*) to 4 (*describes me very well*), and reliability coefficient ranging from .86 to .92. Sample items include “My feelings about my ethnicity are mostly negative” and “I know what my ethnicity means to me.”

Demographics. Demographic information of the participants included age, gender, religious affiliation, ethnicity, education level, marital status and occupation.

Results

Scale Reliabilities and Intercorrelations

As the results in Table 1 show, all the reliability coefficients are in an acceptable range. The alpha coefficient for the Intrinsic Religious Motivation ($\alpha = .89$) measured well with the mean of 30.03 on a possible range of 0 – 40 scores. The mean score of this sample on Spiritual Transcendence Scale was 90.02, larger than the normative mean of 79.35 (Piedmont, 2010). The high mean scores on Intrinsic Religious Motivation and Spiritual Transcendence suggest that this sample was a relatively spiritual group. As indicated in Table 1, the alpha coefficients and mean scores for the rest of the measures also were within the acceptable ranges.

Table 1*Correlations, Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliability Coefficients*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Intrinsic Religious Motivation	--	.69**	-.23**	.14**	.07	.09	.15**	.86**
2. Spiritual Transcendence		--	-.15**	.19**	.23**	.12**	.30**	.95**
3. Individualism			--	-.24**	.02	-.23**	-.16**	-.20**
4. Collectivism				--	.16**	.25**	.21**	.19**
5. Ethnic Identity					---	.07	.26**	.17**
6. Satisfaction with Life						--	.22**	.12**
7. Positive Affect							--	.26**
8. Spirituality								--
Mean	30.03	90.02	21.01	15.62	32.09	14.05	35.44	120.26
Standard Deviation	6.68	11.53	4.78	3.74	7.46	6.17	4.04	16.64
Sample Alpha	.89	.88	.76	.74	.86	.89	.86	---

$N = 637$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; two-tailed

According to Cohen's (1988) criteria for correlational estimates (small = .10; medium = .30; and large = above .50), there is a high significant correlation between intrinsic religious motivation and spiritual transcendence, $r(637) = .68$, $p < .01$, indicating major overlap between these constructs and thus allowing for computing a composite variable of spirituality. Research recommended to form composites if the correlation between two or more variables is about .70 and above (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008).

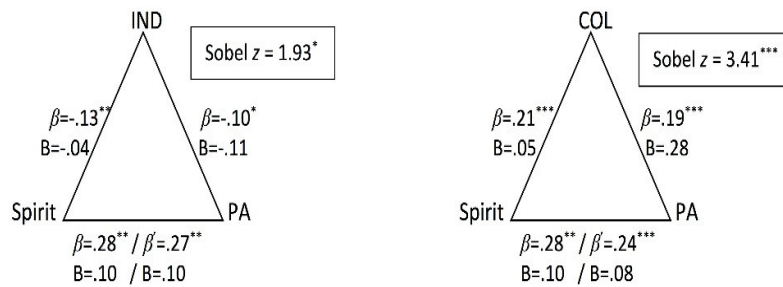
Positive affect had a significant positive correlation with spiritual transcendence, $r(637) = .30$, $p < .01$ and intrinsic religious motivation, $r(637) = .15$, $p < .01$, suggesting that people who experience higher levels of religiosity and spirituality were associated with higher levels of positive affect. Spiritual transcendence had a significant positive correlation with life satisfaction, $r(637) = .12$, $p < .01$. Sociocultural variables of individualism and collectivism also significantly correlated with spirituality and subjective well-being variables. The signs of the significant correlations indicate high individualism was related with lower levels of spirituality and subjective well-being, whereas high collectivism was related to higher levels of spirituality and subjective well-being.

Mediation Analyses

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), a variable functions as a mediator when it meets the following conditions: (1) predictor variable significantly accounts for variations in the outcome variable; (2) predictor variable significantly accounts for the variations in the mediator variable; (3) mediator variable significantly accounts for variations in the outcome variable; and (4) when conditions 2 and 3 are controlled, a previously significant relation between the predictor and outcome variables (condition 1) is either no longer significant, suggesting a significant full mediation, or reduced in effect, suggesting a significant partial mediation (Frazier, Tix, & Baron, 2004).

Four separate mediation hypotheses were tested by using multiple regression analysis, with spirituality as the predictor variable, individualism and collectivism as mediators, and positive affect and satisfaction with life as the outcomes. The results are presented in Figures 1 and 2. As shown in Figure 1, there is a significant mediation effect of individualism in the relationship between spirituality and positive affect, indicated by the slight reduction in unique effects, from $\beta = .28$, $p < .01$ to $\beta = .27$, $p < .01$, Sobel $Z =$

1.93, $p < .01$. Also, the results in Figure 1 for the mediation effect of collectivism suggest a significant partial mediation effect, with effect sizes reduced from $\beta = .28, p < .01$ to $\beta = .24, p < .01$, Sobel $z = 3.41, p < .001$.



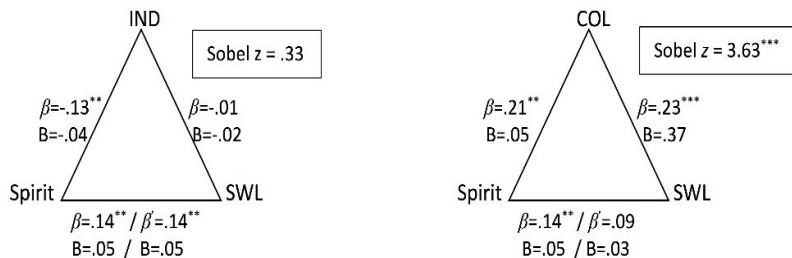
$N = 637$; *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; two-tailed

β = Standardized Coefficients; B = Unstandardized Coefficients

Spirit = Spirituality; IND = Individualism; COL = Collectivism; PA = Positive Affect

Figure 1: Mediating Effects of Individualism and Collectivism on the Relationship between Spirituality and Positive Affect

Preacher and Kelley (2011) suggested that the ratio of the indirect effect to the total effect gives a relative magnitude of mediation effect, calculated by the formula, $ab / ab + c'$, where a represents the effect of predictor variable on the mediator, b represents the effect of mediator on the outcome variable, and c' represents the change in effect of the predictor variable on the outcome variable when both the predictor and mediator variables are entered simultaneously into the regression equation. Plugging in the unstandardized values from Figure 1 into the above equation, 4% of spirituality's total effect on positive affect is mediated by individualism and 15% is mediated by collectivism.



$N = 637$; *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; two-tailed

β = Standardized Coefficients; B = Unstandardized Coefficients

Spirit = Spirituality; IND = Individualism; COL = Collectivism; SWL = Satisfaction With Life

Figure 2: Mediating Effects of Individualism and Collectivism on the Relationship between Spirituality and Satisfaction With Life

As indicated in Figure 2, there was no significant mediation effect of individualism in the relationship between spirituality and satisfaction with life, whereas there was a significant full mediation effect of collectivism, with effect sizes reduced from $\beta = .14, p < .01$ to $\beta = .09, p = n.s.$, Sobel $z = 3.63, p < .001$. Using Preacher and Kelley's (2011) formula to estimate the relative magnitude of mediation effect, 38% of spirituality's total effect on satisfaction with life is mediated by collectivism.

Moderation Analysis

As it was recommended to center the continuous predictor and moderator variables before computing their product in order to reduce the collinearity of these variables with the product term and give the regression coefficients greater practical meaning (Hoyt, Imel, & Chan, 2008), spirituality and ethnic identity were centered before computing an interaction term to test the moderation effects of spirituality and ethnic identity on positive affect and satisfaction with life. Centering is accomplished by subtracting the mean value from the observed value (i.e., $X_{cent} = X - \bar{X}$). Both spirituality and ethnic identity were collapsed into three groups of high, medium, and low for plotting significant interaction effects. Moderation results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Moderation Effects of Ethnic Identity and Spirituality on SWL and PA

Outcome Variables	Model	Independent Variables	R^2	ΔR^2	F	β	t
SWL	1	Spirituality	.01	---	2.85*	.08	2.52*
		Ethnic Identity				.04	.82
	2	Spirit X EI	.02	.01	2.70*	-.06	-1.21
PA	1	Spirituality	.11	---	41.67**	.23	6.64**
		Ethnic Identity				.22	5.58**
	2	Spirit X EI	.12	.01	29.21**	-.06	-2.02*

Note: $N = 637$. SWL = Satisfaction With Life; PA = Positive Affect; EI = Ethnic Identity; Spirit X EI = Interaction term of Spirituality and Ethnic Identity.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$; two-tailed.

The overall models for both the variables were significant, for SWL: $R^2 = .02$, $F(3,631) = 2.70$, $p < .05$; and for PA: $R^2 = .12$, $F(3,631) = 29.21$, $p < .001$. As indicated in Table 2, spirituality had a significant main effect on satisfaction with life. People with higher levels of spirituality experienced higher levels of satisfaction. There was no main effect for ethnic identity and there was no significant interaction effect of spirituality and ethnic identity on satisfaction with life.

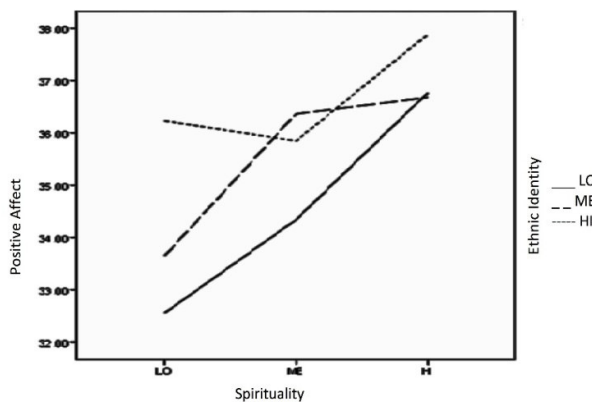


Figure 3: Interaction Effect of Spirituality and Ethnic Identity on Positive Affect

As shown in Table 2 and Figure 3, spirituality and ethnic identity had both main effects and interaction effects on positive affect. In other words, the relation of spirituality to positive affect differed depending on the levels of ethnic identity. As shown in Figure 3, people with higher spirituality levels also experienced higher positive affect. With regard to main effect, the impact of spirituality on positive affect increased as the levels of ethnic identity increased. With regard to interaction effect, positive affect was maximized when both spirituality and ethnic identity levels increased.

Discussion

Individualism and Collectivism as Mediators

In line with Pargament's (2002) statement that spirituality and culture are essential ingredients for the achievement of psychological well-being, scholars have used the sociocultural orientation of individualism and collectivism to suggest significant implications for different forms of psychological functioning based on cultural differences (Oyserman et al., 2002). In this study, individualism and collectivism were hypothesized to have a mediating role in the relationship between spirituality and the subjective well-being variables of positive affect and satisfaction with life. The results indicated some significant mediating effects and suggest that the effects of spirituality on positive affect and satisfaction with life depend on the degree to which the universal value of spirituality and subjective levels of well-being vary across sociocultural aspects (Suh & Oishi, 2002). In other words, the extent to which spirituality influences the overall quality of life depends on the individualist and collectivist goals that people aspire to in their lives.

Specifically, the non-significant mediating role of individualism on satisfaction with life and the overall stronger role of collectivism on both satisfaction with life and positive affect are not consistent with the previous explanations by researchers. Diener, Diener, and Diener (1995) reported that individualists are happier than collectivists. Suh (2000) reiterated that a higher sense of personal freedom, stronger desire to be happy, and putting a more positive spin to life evaluations account for the happier individualists. On the contrary, the results in this study indicate that the collectivists experience higher levels of subjective well-being when the cultural orientation mediates the effects of spirituality. The universal and the connective nature of spirituality appears to associate strongly with the sociocultural orientation of collectivism in creating higher levels of satisfaction with life and positive affect.

While trying to reinterpret the meaning of individualism and collectivism, Sampson (2000) examined the religious roots of individualism and collectivism, and the implications they have for today's societal and religious trends. Sampson looked at this topic primarily in terms of the person-other relationship. He noted that in the individualism orientation, people create sharply drawn person-other boundaries, and thus rely less on others or depend minimally on a community to form his or her identity. In the collectivism orientation, person and other boundaries are blurred, constituting a much more interdependent relationship. Moreover, Walsh (2000) described spirituality as being a relational transcendent relationship with someone, and Piedmont (1999) suggested that spirituality provides individuals with a new personal centering that brings them into connection with a higher reality, and creates an experience of joy and a sense of coherence, which in themselves are variables of subjective well-being. If these interpretations are taken in the same frame, it becomes obvious that the relational aspect of spirituality is validly mediated by the social dimension of collectivism in affecting the subjective levels of positive affect and satisfaction with life. In other words, those individuals who experience greater relational spirituality also feel deeply interconnected, emphasize stronger "we" consciousness, and experience higher emotional interdependence, in turn elevating levels of their well-being.

Ethnic Identity as Moderator

Research has indicated that ethnic heritage and identity are deeply intertwined with people's spiritual belief systems (see Chae et al., 2004; Dubow et al., 2000; Gillum & Griffith, 2010; Hoffmann et al., 2008). Research has also reported that spirituality serves to preserve a connection to an individual's ethnic background (Juang & Syed, 2008). Therefore, it seemed logical to hypothesize that ethnic identity interacts with spirituality in influencing the outcome variables of satisfaction with life and positive affect.

In this study, there is one significant interaction effect of spirituality and ethnic identity on positive affect, suggesting that positive affect is at maximum levels when both spirituality and ethnic identity increase simultaneously. Conversely, positive affect is low at low levels of spirituality and ethnic identity. Based on the conceptualization of spirituality as an intrinsic motivation (Hoge, 1972; Piedmont 1999) and ethnic identity as the affective sense of belonging to a particular group (Umaña-Taylor, et al., 2004), it becomes clear that a positive sense of group identity with an associated affective and affirmative component combined with a higher motivational spirituality leads one to experience higher levels of positive affect. The positive affective component that comes from a firm sense of group membership seems to be very important for people to experience and maintain a higher sense of general well-being and positive affect.

The significant interaction effect of spirituality and ethnic identity on positive affect could be said to be supported by MacDonald's (2009) review of the literature, which suggested that psychologists can trace ideas regarding the relation of identity to spirituality back to William James (1902), Erik Erikson (1980), Carl Rogers (1980) and Marcia (1966). Marcia was among the first to systematically explore how spirituality may interact with identity formation. According to Erikson's (1980) developmental model, identity may be understood as the product of the interaction between an individual and the socio-historical influences. Such an interaction continues to result in a subjective and interpersonal sense of self. MacDonald (2009) said that when we examine various perspectives concerning the interplay between spirituality and identity, the apparent distinction upon how identity itself is conceptualized becomes vivid. In most conventional psychological theories, insofar as spirituality relates to the "transcendent," as was the case in the current study, identity then involves how one experiences and integrates the sense of relationship to the transcendent into one's self-sense, including in the sphere of ethnicity.

Further, Kiesling, Sorell, Montgomery, and Colwell (2006) indicated that spirituality appears to foster a sense of connection with highly valued aspects of self-identity and interactions with significant (ethnic) others strongly influences how spirituality makes meaning and promotes well-being. Evidence from the current study suggests that spirituality and ethnicity do influence each other to a fair degree, and this in turn appears to be related to higher levels of positive affect. Hence, it is worth considering that spirituality's relation to certain outcome variables may manifest itself differently as a function of ethnic identity levels.

Implications

In this study, the significant mediating effects of individualism-collectivism and the moderating role of ethnic identity endorse integration of sociocultural and ethnic variables as a generic approach to helping people (APA, 2003; Arnet, 2008; Sinha, 2002). Further, Sinha (2002) indicated that the entry of sociocultural values into human psychological functioning needs to be seriously considered. Most of the studies in the past seemed to have conceptualized culture's late entry in order to find human universals and cultural similarities. Yet, what is necessary is to focus on society, culture, and ethnicity in understanding the process of contextualization. Assessing the early entrance of sociocultural and ethnic values, such as through mediation and moderation analyses, is also important to understanding the impact of social factors, cultural relativism and ethnocentric values on the psychological functioning and well-being of individuals.

The findings also have significant implications for social service and clinical practice. The impact of sociocultural variables require practitioners to decode the symptoms of their subjects in the context of specific sociocultural orientation and ethnic identity, and then develop interventions that address wider social meanings and promote their well-being.

I would like to illustrate the practical implications of the results of this study, particularly the important relationship between ethnic identity and spirituality, by referring to excerpts from Robinson's (2015) personal journey. Robinson was faced with a series of questions connected to her worldview in relation to God and humanity. While she knew she believed in people's good intentions, she didn't think or feel she believed that way all the time. She said, "What I didn't realize then was that this way of viewing others was influenced by my cultural worldview that I had grown up with as a Latina, and this worldview differed from the white Christian community I was involved with then." Robinson thought that Latinos generally recognize all of history, including that of Christianity, as a story about broken people. She further reflected, "In that season of my life, I had no understanding of how my own Latino culture influenced me at very deep levels. While the white evangelical church I came to faith in was right to emphasize that my new identity in Christ was of ultimate importance, it failed to acknowledge that their own understanding of the Christian life was influenced by majority culture lenses and that this was the Christianity they taught me. I picked up early on in my time as a believer that my life before Christ was to be forgotten and dismissed, which implicitly included my ethnic identity too."

Robinson (2015) said that her life before coming to faith was painful (she didn't elaborate on it), and she thought that ignoring that part of her identity was the right thing to do. But, she eventually realized that "the problem with only focusing on my new identity in Christ devoid of culture was that it wasn't really true. Neglecting to acknowledge my own Latino identity as a part of how God made me, didn't leave me free from cultural influences. It just left me confused. When there were contradictions in cultural values that showed up in my discipleship within this majority culture Christian community, it left me feeling like I was always immature and in need of growth when my way of seeing God and the world differed from others around me." Eventually Robinson got a chance to work for a Latino community. She said, "Starting to work for Destino, though, sent me on a journey of exploring my own ethnic identity and the valuable ways the culture had shaped me. I began to feel so affirmed in a community that for the first time shared my story and my assumptions. Their view of God was similar to me because of our shared common experiences."

Along this journey, Robinson (2015) also learned to face the broken parts of her culture and heal the past wounds. She said, "All of these experiences are a part of what God has used and is using to grow me into wholeness in my ethnic identity. So, while there was a time in my life where I would have wanted to deny being Latina, I can now say with confidence that my ethnicity is a part of who God has made me to be. My culture isn't a liability, but a blessing that wasn't meant to be erased at my conversion."

Limitations and Future Directions

Even though this study provides a good support for a mediating role of individualism and collectivism, and a moderating role of ethnic identity in spirituality's relation to subjective well-being, it is not without limitations. One of the limitations is that most of the participants were Christians. Although religion was controlled for in the analyses, it is unclear to what extent the Christian faith and theology influenced the results. Another limitation is that of measurement issues. The latent constructs used in this study may have different meanings for different people. Moreover, the sample included subjects from different ethnic backgrounds, and English may not have been the primary language for some. A final limitation is that the results prohibit making causal inferences, for the analyses conducted in this study were quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational, and regression in nature.

Therefore, future investigations need to replicate these findings and expand the results by including subjects of many more sociocultural and ethnic backgrounds, and religious affiliations. In addition, a few qualitative and open-ended questions in the survey design would also help to supplement the interpretability of the quantitative results. Such research designs will increase the empirical evidence for and practical significance of integrating sociocultural and ethnic aspects of spirituality and subjective well-being in both theory building and practice.

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