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Chapter 16.

The Mysticism Scale as Measure for Subjective Spirituality: New Results with Hood's M-Scale and the Development of a Short Form

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Abstract

In this chapter, we suggest the use of Hood's Mysticism Scale (M-scale) for a differential assessment of subjective spirituality. We base this view on the conceptualization of mysticism and its relation to spirituality, and on the definition of spirituality as individualized experience-orientated religiosity. This perspective was empirically tested in the Bielefeld-based Cross-cultural Study on Spirituality, which explored in comprehensive semantic analyses how participants in the USA and Germany define spirituality and revealed that more spiritual than religious people preferably associate spirituality with experiences of all-connectedness, search for a higher self, existential truth, and humanistic morality. Moreover, structural equations modeling based on this and other recent data sets reveal that the M-scale and its factors have considerable effects on self-rated spirituality. Thus, we recommend the M-scale as measure for subjective spirituality, which avoids the widespread problem of many extant measures that assess spirituality primarily in terms of either (Christian) religiosity or psychosocial well-being. The M-scale may be very useful in research that intends to assess the subjective spirituality of a diversity of participants who might affiliate with various religious traditions and worldviews, including the non-religious, atheists, and non-theists. Besides the well-established 32-item version of the M-scale, the chapter additionally presents an economic 8-item short form of the M-scale and its psychometric properties. (211 words)

Brief Abstract

Hood's Mysticism Scale can be used as differential measure for subjective spirituality, which we define as individualized experience-orientated religiosity. The Bielefeld-based Cross-cultural Study on Spirituality revealed that more spiritual than religious respondents preferably associate spirituality with experiences of all-connectedness, search for a higher self, existential truth, and humanistic morality. Our data demonstrate that the Mysticism Scale and its factors have considerable effects on self-rated spirituality. Avoiding the widespread problem of assessing spirituality either in terms of (Christian) religiosity or of psychosocial well-being, the Mysticism Scale may be very useful in research that intends to assess the subjective spirituality of a diversity of participants who might affiliate with various religious traditions and worldviews, or self-identify as non-religious, atheist, and non-theist. Besides the well-established 32-item version of the M-scale, the chapter additionally presents an economic 8-item short form of the M-scale and its psychometric properties. (*143 words*)

Keywords

Horizontal transcendence, Mysticism, Mysticism scale, Privatized religion, Religion, Spirituality, Ultimate concern, Transcendence, Vertical transcendence

Index Terms

Biographical narrative, Common core, Extrovertive mysticism, Horizontal transcendence, Interpretation of mysticism, Introvertive mysticism, Mysticism, Mysticism scale, Privatized religion, Religion, Religious, Semantics, Subjective spirituality, Spirituality, Ultimate concern, Transcendence, Vertical transcendence

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The Mysticism Scale as Measure for Subjective Spirituality: New Results with Hood's M-Scale and the Development of a Short Form

Religion has proven to be difficult to define, yet a consensus is that however defined, religion is a multi-dimensional construct (Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009, 2018). While many multi-dimensional schemas have been proposed, all include religious beliefs and experiences as identifiable components along with other expressions that can vary widely. To date, some consensus about defining and measuring core dimensions of religiosity in research have been reached throughout the last decades (Glock, 1962; Huber & Huber, 2012; Smart, 1998). However, the discussion about the definition and the assessment of spirituality and about the relation between spirituality and religion is still widely unfinished, although numerous proposals have been made throughout recent years (for critical overviews, cf. Hill & Pargament, 2003; Koenig, 2008; Oman, 2013; Reinert & Koenig, 2013; Steinhäuser, Fitchett, Handzo, Johnson, Koenig, Pargament, Puchalski, Sinclair, Taylor, & Balboni, 2017; Streib & Klein, 2016; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005).

If spirituality is conceptually distinguished from religion (into a religion-spirituality binary) and understood as the wider construct, roughly two ways of measuring spirituality can be observed. First, spirituality is operationalized in terms of a general spirituality — often with special interest in spiritual experiences, as in Underwood and Teresi's (2002) Daily Spiritual Experience Scale or in the Index of Core Spiritual Experiences (Kass, Friedman, Leserman, Zuttermeister, & Benson, 1991). Second, in particular within health research, measures of spiritual well-being such as the Spiritual Well-being Scale (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982) or the Functional Assessment of Chronic Illness Therapy — Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Peterman, Fitchett, Brady, Hernandez, & Cella, 2002) are used. While the validity of tools measuring

spiritual well-being is often affected by intermingling religious contents and issues of mental health (Garssen, Visser, & de Jager Meezenbroek, 2016; Koenig, 2008), with respect to measures of general spirituality, it can be questioned whether these instruments really cover anything else than traditionally described religious beliefs, activities, or experiences (Pargament, 1999). Many scales of both types lack construct validity because authors do not present evidence that their scales are correlated with self-rated spirituality or vary depending on spiritual self-identifications (Klein, Silver, Streib, Hood, & Coleman, 2016). A number of studies from distinct cultural contexts have documented the diversity of associations with the term (Berghuijs, Pieper, & Bakker, 2013; Greenwald & Harder, 2003; la Cour, Ausker, & Hvidt, 2012; Schlehofer, Omoto, & Adelman, 2008; Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butter, Belavich, Hipp, Scott, & Kadar, 1997). Surprisingly, however, many scales only sparsely reflect the varieties of subjective understandings of spirituality that respondents might have in mind.

In our own cross-cultural research in the U.S. and in Germany, our content analysis and principal component analyses of 1779 free-text entries of respondents' subjective definitions of spirituality revealed that, for some, spirituality was an established part of religion, while it meant strict opposition to religious dogmatism for others (Eisenmann, Klein, Swhajor-Biesemann, Drexelius, Streib, & Keller, 2016). While spirituality, for some, was associated with a theistic worldview including God, gods, or other supernatural beings, for others it indicated a sense of connectedness with nature or the universe, and was thus embedded in a non-theistic world view. While spirituality for some meant behaving according to ethical norms and ideals, for others it indicated a search for a higher inner self or for existential truth. Hence, the distinct notions of spirituality reflected various individual experiences and symbols of transcendence, both in a vertical and a horizontal perspective, and confirmed our impression that subjective spirituality

can be characterized as privatized, experience-oriented type of religion (Streib & Hood, 2011; Utsch & Klein, 2011).

Taken together, many existing measures of spirituality lack evidence for their validity, because (1) they have not proven to statistically relate to basic measures of subjective spirituality (e.g., spiritual self-ratings or self-identifications), (2) they do not sufficiently cover what people have in mind subjectively when thinking of spirituality, and (3) because they do not satisfyingly clarify whether or how subjective spirituality shall or shall not be related to religion. Hence, a convincing measure for the assessment of spirituality should (1) provide evidence that it is somehow related to basic measures of subjective spirituality, (2) show evidence that it reflects core elements of widespread subjective notions of spirituality, and (3) be able to assess subjective spirituality both within and outside of established religion.

In this chapter, we will present Hood's (1975) Mysticism Scale (M-scale), as a proper tool for measuring subjective spirituality meeting the aforementioned criteria. The M-Scale is a classic measure for mystical experiences, which has been developed on a sound theoretical basis long before spirituality became a hot topic within the psychology of religion, and it has empirically been tested in various cultural contexts. In our Bielefeld-based Cross-cultural Study on Spirituality (Streib & Hood, 2016b) we observe that the M-scale is an excellent predictor of self-rated spirituality (Klein, Silver, Coleman, Streib, & Hood, 2016) and does relate differentially to the subjective understandings of spirituality (Streib & Hood, 2016a). This chapter is based on the findings from this Spirituality Study, but it takes results further by including new, longitudinal data.

In order to present the M-scale as a suitable tool for the assessment of subjective spirituality, as theoretical basis we first give an overview about the concept of mysticism, the

theoretical conceptualization of the M-scale, and the theoretical linkages to spirituality research. We continue with a literature review about empirical findings regarding the association between mysticism, as measured with the M-scale, and spirituality. In the methods section, we present the database and assessment tools that have been used for the Bielefeld-based Cross-cultural Study on Spirituality and subsequent studies, including a follow-up survey with selected participants. On this basis, we present selected findings on psychometric properties such as the factorial structure of the scale, support for its validity as a measure for subjective spirituality, and reliability. Given the potential of the M-scale, we have additionally constructed and validated an efficient short 8-item version that can be included in surveys if the number of items needs to be limited. We finish our chapter with a brief overview over further multicultural applications and a discussion of current challenges and limitations.

Theoretical Basis: Mysticism, the Mysticism Scale, and Its Relation to Spirituality

William James (1902/1985) claimed that mysticism is the “root and centre” (p. 309) of religion. This opens the discussion — conceptually and empirically — about how exactly mysticism relates to religious and spiritual experiences. Moreover, from James’s account we receive at least two markers creating problems for a measurement based empirical psychology. Mysticism, James claimed, is both noetic (a source of knowledge) and ineffable. Thus if religion and even more so spirituality are difficult to define, what is to be done with mysticism given these two indicators?

Stace (1960), a philosopher, addressed James’ issue by selecting from a wide catholicity of evidence descriptions of mystical experience he argued are alleged to be ineffable, but from textual examples representing the Abrahamic faiths, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Taoism he provided a phenomenological model what he argued is a universal core to mystical experience –

the Common Core Thesis of mysticism. His solution to the problem of language was to make a distinction between minimally interpreted experience and the linguistic expression of this experience. This allows for the claim that similar if not identical experiences at the phenomenological level may be different linguistically described due to historical, cultural, and inherent language differences. It leaves open the claim that mysticism may be a unique *sui generis* experience that can occur spontaneously or be deliberately within various faith traditions. Mystical experience needs not be religiously interested, although interest in mysticism is unlikely to be sustained by those without at least implicit religious interests (Copleston, 1982).

Hood (1975) developed the Mysticism Scale (M-scale) based upon operationalization of Stace's proposed universal core and over the decades it has become the most widely used measure of mysticism (Lukoff & Lu, 1988). Hood's scale has proved to be a robust empirical confirmation of Stace's phenomenological model in both exploratory and confirmatory factor analytic studies (Hood, Hill & Spilka, 2009). It provides an empirical operationalization of mysticism that is both theory- and empirically driven. Finally, mysticism theory has an important theoretical base in the phenomenological distinction between experience and interpretation rooted in the work of both James and Stace. Hood's construction of the M-scale is not only deeply rooted in James' account of mysticism, but it also clearly reflects the phenomenology of mysticism presented by Stace (1960). Two lines of distinctions can convincingly be established based on this phenomenology of mysticism:

- (a) Experiences that are primarily related to the internal world of the individual (*introvertive mysticism*), and experiences that have a focus on the relation to the external world (*extrovertive mysticism*); and

- (b) Experiences that cannot or do not need to be accompanied with a symbolic interpretation, and experiences that the individual immediately associates with symbolic language and calls them holy, sacred, divine, wonder, or revelation (*interpretation*).

While the initial analysis by Hood (1975) discovered indeed two factors related to mystical experiences (the first factor including the *introvertive* and *extrovertive* dimensions, the second including *interpretation*), further confirmatory factor analysis has demonstrated a three factor solution (Hood, Morris, & Watson, 1993). The three-factor model includes:

- (a) *introvertive mysticism* as first factor, which consists of items related to the aspects (facets) *timelessness and spacelessness* (e.g., “I have had an experience which was both timeless and spaceless”), *ego loss* (e.g., “I have had an experience in which something greater than myself seemed to absorb me”), and *ineffability* (e.g., “I have had an experience which cannot be expressed in words”),
- (b) *extrovertive mysticism* as the second factor, which consists of items of *inner subjectivity* (e.g., “I have had an experience in which all things seemed to be conscious”) and *unity* (e.g., “I have had an experience in which I realized the oneness of myself with all things”),
- (c) the third factor, *interpretation*, which consists of items associated with the three aspects of *positive affect* (e.g., “I have experienced profound joy”), *sacredness* (e.g., “I have had an experience which I knew to be sacred”), and *noetic quality* (e.g., “I have had an experience in which a new view of reality was revealed to me”).

The full list of items is presented in the Appendix to this chapter. Taken together, this phenomenological portrait of mysticism provides a solid base for the assessment of mystical

experiences taken as a coherent experiential domain. It may, however, also be used in a differential approach that attends to the different effects and relations, which the dimensions of mystical experiences may have to other psychological or religious characteristics and, in particular, to spirituality. It is noteworthy that the work of Stace and Hood with respect to mysticism began decades before the current discussion of the religion-spirituality binary and the recent attempts to assess spirituality or to distinguish people due to their self-identifications as spiritual, religious, neither, or both. But, as we are going to demonstrate, mysticism research is by no means irrelevant to this current concern with spirituality.

Indeed, there are good theoretical reasons to link the empirical investigation of spirituality with mysticism research, for which we can refer to classic works from the philosophy, psychology, and sociology of religion on experiences in the religious-mystical (and potentially spiritual) realm. They are all “pre-spiritual” in that they use the term by which the phenomenon was called before the relatively recent semantic turn to spirituality, namely “religion.”

In Schleiermacher’s (1799/1996) definition of religion as “intuition and feeling” or, more specifically, as “sensibility and taste for the infinite” (p. 59), we see a strong argument for both the experiential, mystical ground of religion and its relatedness to the infinite/the universe, whatever the individual intuitus. James’s (1902) famous definition of religion (“feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine,” p. 72), unambiguously includes individual experiences and his proposal to understand the divine “very broadly” so as to include “godless or quasi-godless creeds” (p. 77). More than one psychologist has noted that if James were writing today, his lectures would undoubtedly have been entitled varieties of *spiritual experience*

(Gorsuch & Miller, 1999). Fuller (2001) holds William James to be the exemplar of what it means to be “spiritual but not religious” (p. 130). Thus, we may rightly refer to James for a close relation of mystical experiences and what later in the century will be called spirituality.

In the sociological discourse of which Weber and Troeltsch were part, the church-sect distinction has become one of the basic tools for understanding religion and for constructing the religious field. In Weber’s (1921) and in Troeltsch’s (1912) models, however, it is not only the *sects* with their prophets which compete with the churches and their priests; there is a third party (see Bourdieu, 1971), which Weber identified as the *magicians*, and Troeltsch as *mysticism*. While the mystic, according to Troeltsch (1912), generally insists on “a direct inward and present religious experience” (p. 730), the mystical groups fall in two camps: one is embedded in the church, the other is in opposition to the churches, it is “unchurched mysticism” (p. 730).

Based on these and other classic contributions, Streib and Hood (2011; 2013; 2016c) conceptualized spirituality as privatized, experience-oriented religion. This view includes the assumption that the more spiritual the individual, the more they see transcendence not necessarily mediated by institutions of priests, systems of belief, established rituals, or belonging to a specific religious organization, nor by the teachings of a charismatic, but experienced as immediacy to the ultimate. This constitutes the essential relation between spirituality and mysticism. The conclusion from this for the assessment of spirituality is that any measure of spirituality should account for the subjective, experience-oriented character of spirituality, and using a measure for mysticism may be the key to achieve this.

It should be noted explicitly that this conceptualization does not limit spirituality to the experience of God, gods or the divine, but is open for and includes symbolizations of transcendence in which the divine is understood very broadly and symbolizations are clearly

non-theistic, such as in connectedness with nature or with the universe. To account for this, the distinction between “vertical” and “horizontal” transcendence (see e.g. Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009, pp. 282, 286) has been introduced. It is meant to prevent the exclusion of people who are not religiously affiliated and identify with non-theism, agnosticism, or humanism, but who explicitly self-identify as spiritual. Thus another conclusion is that any measure of spirituality should allow for theistic and non-theistic symbolizations of transcendence — and as Hood’s (1975) M-scale does ask for experiences and their minimal interpretations as emotionally positive, noetic, and sacred but does not ask for any concrete belief, it certainly meets this requirement.

Literature Review: Empirical Findings on the Association between Mysticism and Spirituality

In regard to the relation of mysticism to subjective spirituality in contrast to religion, it is noteworthy that already in the 1970s, Hood observed that (1) people more committed to religious experience than to church showed higher levels of mysticism compared to people committed more strongly to church (Hood, 1973), and (2) people attending church frequently and those attending seldom or never did not differ in their levels of *introvertive* and *extrovertive mysticism*. These two forms of mysticism refer to basic phenomenological experiences, but they differed only in the degree of the (potentially religious) *interpretation* of their experiences (Hood, 1976). Similarly, Chen, Zhang, Hood and Watson (2012) found only small mean differences of *introvertive* and *extrovertive mysticism*, but a stronger difference of *interpretation* between Chinese Christians and non-Christians. Morris and Hood (1980) reported that Baptists and *Nones* (those with no religious affiliation) did not differ in their levels of unity experiences, but only in their levels of religious *interpretation*. Although not explicitly dealing with spirituality, these

findings already indicate that mystical experiences occur outside established religious communities and beside explicit religious activities.

Other studies working with the M-Scale have explicitly included measures of spiritual self-identifications or self-ratings. Zinnbauer et al. (1997) used a short version of the M-Scale consisting of items about ego-loss and unity experiences together with two 5-point Likert-type single items asking whether the participants considered themselves to be spiritual or religious. While mystical experiences did not correlate significantly with self-rated religion ($r = .04$), the correlation between mystical experiences and self-rated spirituality was found to be significant ($r = .27$). This finding confirms that mystical experiences are not necessarily associated with religion, but they reflect self-identification as being spiritual.

In a study reported by Hood (2003) using the entire M-scale, participants were sorted into four groups according to their self-identifications as either *more religious than spiritual*, *more spiritual than religious*, *equally religious and spiritual*, or *neither religious nor spiritual*. The highest levels of mystical experiences were reported by the group of the *more spiritual than religious*; however, the important difference was between the two groups which included spirituality in their self-identifications (*more spiritual than religious* and *equally religious and spiritual*) in comparison to the two groups which excluded spirituality (*more religious than spiritual* and *neither religious nor spiritual*). This finding has widely been corroborated both for Americans and for Germans in the Bielefeld-based Cross-cultural Study on Spirituality (Klein et al., 2016) and illustrates that mysticism is associated with spirituality both within and outside traditional religion. Additionally, Klein and colleagues (2016) could show that the factors of the M-scale are good predictors of self-rated spirituality both among their American and German

study participants, and, in particular, among respondents who self-identified as spiritual (either *more spiritual than religious* or *equally religious and spiritual*).

Taking these findings together, mystical experiences as measured with the M-scale correlate significantly with self-rated spirituality. How mysticism is related to religion certainly depends on how people relate spirituality and religion, but also on the differential analysis of *interpretation* and the *introvertive/extrovertive* dimensions of mysticism (Klein et al., 2016).

Method

The research results presented in the following sections of this chapter are intended to further evidence, based on a large sample, of the factor structure of the M-scale. In order to illustrate that the M-scale is clearly related to basic measures of subjective spirituality, we present an analysis of the effects of the M-scale factors on self-rated spirituality as well as an analysis of mean differences of the M-scale factors depending on spiritual, religious, and non-theist self-identifications. Thereby, we could not only take the differential analysis of the M-scale one step further, but we were able to relate it also to a differential analysis of the semantics of spirituality aimed at showing that the three factors of the M-scale are differentially related to common subjective understandings of spirituality. Since spirituality can, among other notions, be understood as part of religion, this analysis helps us also to illustrate which components of the M-scale relate to subjective spirituality within established religion and which relate to forms of spirituality outside of traditional religion. Further, a short form of the M-scale has been developed and validated and will be introduced. Finally, longitudinal data allowed for an analysis of retest reliability of the M-scale in both the full and the short forms.

Participants

Analyses on the effects of the M-scale on self-rated spirituality, confirmatory factor analyses and the development and validation of the M-scale short form are based on a sample of participants ($N = 2300$). They answered the M-scale as part of extensive questionnaires in Bielefeld-based projects: 1280 from the United States, 1020 from Germany, 1409 female (61.4%), ranging in age from 15 to 90 years ($M_{age} = 36.93$). The largest part of this sample consists of the participants in the Bielefeld-based Cross-cultural Study on Spirituality (Streib & Hood, 2016b), which completed data collection in 2012 ($N = 1886$; $n_{USA} = 1113$, $n_{GER} = 773$; $n_{female} = 1141$ (60.5%); $M_{age} = 38.0$, range: 15 to 90 years). This sample from the Spirituality Project is unique, because participants answered many instruments for the assessment of the semantics of what spirituality means for them, including free text entries for their definition of spirituality. An interesting characteristic of this sample is that it includes 50.0% respondents who self-identify as *more spiritual than religious* (for more details, see Keller, Streib, Silver, Klein, & Hood, 2016). Hence, this subsample allows for the analyses of relations of the M-scale factors with self-identifications as spiritual, religious, or non-theist and with subjective understandings of spirituality. There is also another distinctive characteristic associated with this Spirituality Sample: 290 cases are longitudinal, since these participants have recently (2015-2017) participated in a follow-up study where they answered an extensive online-questionnaire including the M-Scale and most instruments for the assessment of the semantics of spirituality and many other psychometric scales. Thus, we have longitudinal data from these participants ($N = 290$; $n_{USA} = 83$, $n_{GER} = 207$; $n_{female} = 143$ (49.3%); $M_{age} = 44.5$, range: 18 to 79 years), on which we could base the analyses of retest reliability. Finally, in addition to the Spirituality Sample and adding up to the $N = 2300$ cases, we have included another subsample of 414 cases, who

answered our recent questionnaire with the M-Scale and many other instruments for the first time in 2015-2017 ($N = 414$; $n_{USA} = 167$, $n_{GER} = 247$; $n_{female} = 268$ (65.5%); $M_{age} = 31.9$, range: 16 to 82 years).

Measures

Besides basic demographics, the questionnaire included a relatively large number of psychological scales (for more details, see Keller, et al., 2016); we limit our description here to the measures we used for the analyses presented in this chapter. For an assessment of mystical experiences, we used Hood's (1975) M-scale. (The full list of items in English and German translation is presented in the Appendix to this chapter.) A 5-point rating scale has been used, ranging from -2 (*very inaccurate/definitely not true*) to +2 (*very accurate/definitely true*). Reliability for the entire sample ($N = 2300$) was $\alpha = .90$ for *introvertive mysticism*, $\alpha = .90$ for *extrovertive mysticism*, $\alpha = .89$ for *interpretation*, and $\alpha = .95$ for the total M-scale score. For the assessment of how the respondents rate their own religiosity or spirituality, two 5-point self-rating items have been used: "How would you describe yourself?", with responses ranging from 1 = *not religious* to 5 = *religious* and from 1 = *not spiritual* to 5 = *spiritual*. We also included a forced-choice self-identification item – "Mark the statement below that most identifies you" – offering four response options: *I am more religious than spiritual*, *I am more spiritual than religious*, *I am equally religious and spiritual*, and *I am neither religious nor spiritual*. For the assessment of self-identifications beyond being spiritual and/or religious, we administered a multiple-choice item including yes/no-options for self-descriptions of being *atheist* and *non-theist*.

Combining the two self-identifications has allowed, in the sample of the Bielefeld-based Cross-cultural Study on Spirituality ($N = 1886$), the construction of what we called focus groups.

Six groups emerged in statistically acceptable size: (1) the more religious than spiritual ($n_{USA} = 70$, $n_{GER} = 75$); (2) the equally religious and spiritual ($n_{USA} = 302$, $n_{GER} = 140$); (3) the more spiritual than religious (except atheist/non-theists) ($n_{USA} = 540$, $n_{GER} = 337$); (4) the more spiritual than religious atheist/non-theists ($n_{USA} = 26$, $n_{GER} = 40$); (5) the neither religious nor spiritual (except atheist/non-theists) ($n_{USA} = 107$, $n_{GER} = 94$); and (6) the neither religious nor spiritual atheist/non-theists ($n_{USA} = 65$, $n_{GER} = 77$).

For an exploration of the semantics of spirituality and religion, we invited respondents to write down their own subjective definitions in free text entry fields. The question “How would you define the term ‘spirituality’?” has been answered by a majority of participants ($N = 1779$; $n_{USA} = 1039$, $n_{GER} = 740$). These definitions were not only used for corpus analysis (Altmeyer & Klein, 2016; Altmeyer, Klein, Keller, Silver, Hood, & Streib, 2015) but also were evaluated using content-analytic coding and factor analyses, in order to identify semantic dimensions of spirituality (Eisenmann et al., 2016).

Findings: Factor Structure, Validity Concerns, Construction of a Brief Version, and Retest-Reliability

The Mysticism Scale as Predictor of Self-rated Spirituality

In our book on spirituality (Streib & Hood, 2016b), we already presented results of a structural equation model to estimate, on the basis of the $N = 1886$ cases in our sample, the effects of the three mysticism factors on self-rated religiosity and spirituality (Klein et al., 2016). Using the model from this analysis, after including the additional new respondents and thus calculation with a total of $N = 2300$ cases and entering self-rated spirituality as only target, we replicated this SEM estimate and present results here.

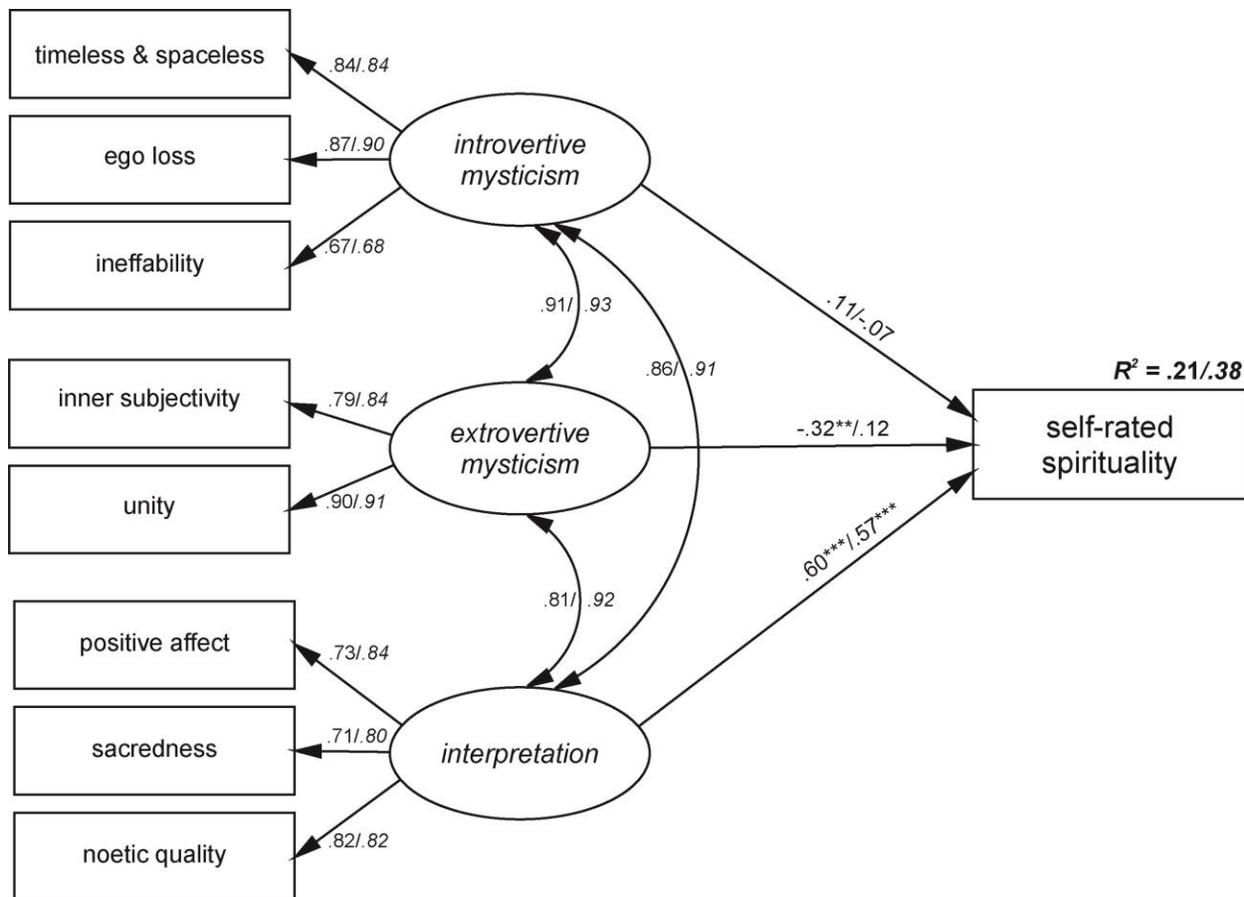


Figure 1. Effects of Mysticism on Self-rated Spirituality

The model in Figure 1 indicates that 21% (U.S. sample) and 38% (German sample) of the variance in self-rated spirituality is explained by the responses to the 32 items of the M-scale. Hence, as in previous studies, the M-scale appears to be a good predictor of subjective spirituality. The entire model has acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 408.59$, $df = 44$; $CFI = .972$ and $RMSEA = .060$, upper bound = $.065$, lower bound = $.055$). Thus, the model in Figure 1 also presents very good evidence for the factor structure of the M-scale.

It should be noted, however, that because of the extremely high covariances between the three mysticism factors, their regression weights on self-rated spirituality should be interpreted with care, since the strongest effects can be observed for the *interpretation* factor which in part also mediates the effects of *introvertive* and *extrovertive mysticism* (cf. Klein et al., 2016).

Hence, for a differential estimation of the relation of introvertive, extrovertive, and interpretative mysticism to self-ratings of being religious, spiritual, or non-theist, we additionally present an Analysis of Variance with the six focus groups as independent variable.

Mysticism and Spiritual/Religious/Non-theist Self-identifications

Figure 2 presents results from an Analysis of Variance with the means (ranging from -2 to +2) of the three M-scale factors as dependent variables and the focus groups as they were constructed using the respondents' self-identifications as religious, spiritual, and non-theist in the sample of the Bielefeld-based Cross-cultural Study, with Spirituality as independent variable. There were significant overall between-group differences ranging from $F_{(5,1867)} = 85.59$ ($p < .001$) for *introvertive mysticism* and $F_{(5,1867)} = 86.12$ ($p < .001$) for *interpretation* to $F_{(5,1867)} = 94.27$ ($p < .001$) for *extrovertive mysticism*. As can be easily discovered in Figure 2, however, not all group differences are large, and some differences are insignificant, although there is an overall significant effect. For example, the “equally religious and spiritual” and the “more spiritual than religious (without non-theists)” groups are very close on *interpretation*, they nevertheless significantly differ on *extrovertive mysticism* ($\Delta M = 0.24$, $p = .005$). Interestingly, the “more religious than spiritual” respondents appear to associate particularly *interpretation* with their self-rated spirituality, while *introvertive* and *extrovertive mysticism* are very close the neutral mean line.

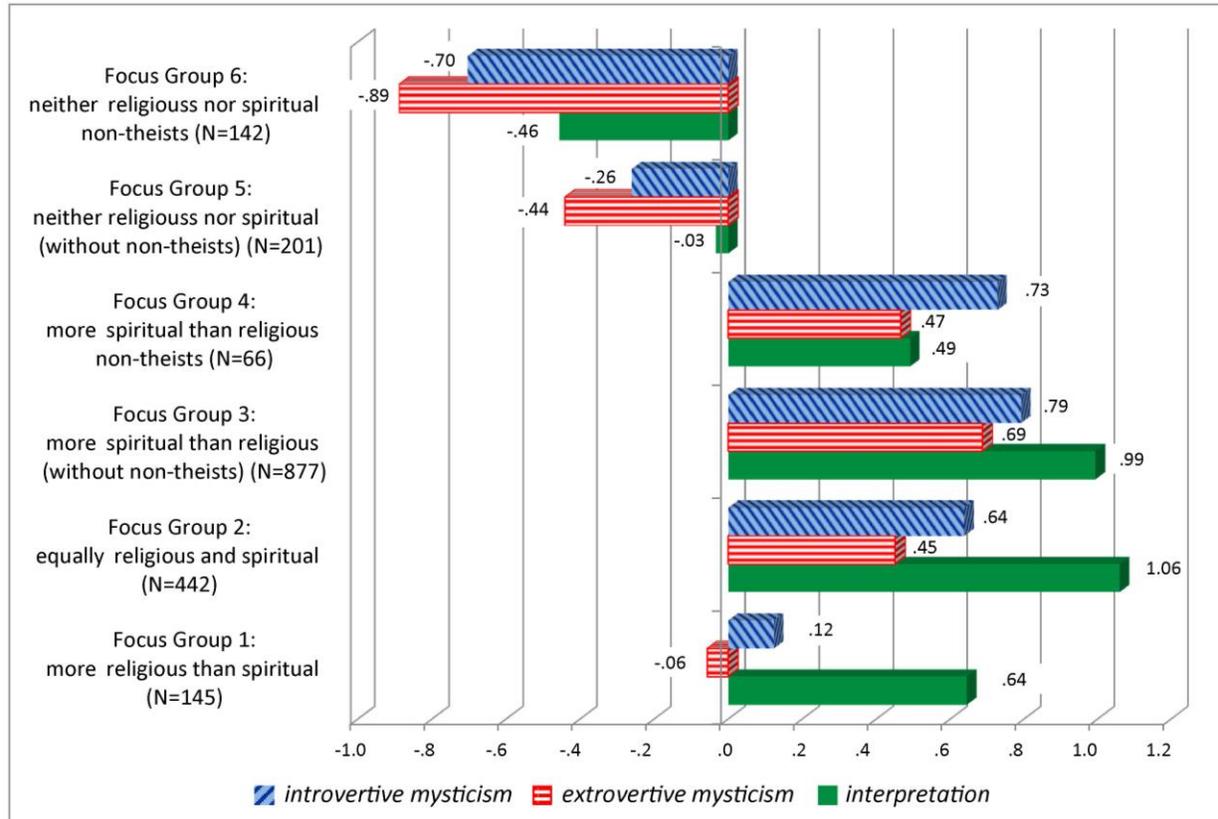


Figure 2. Analyses of Variance of M-scale Factor Means According to Spiritual/Religious/Non-theist Self-identification

Noteworthy also is the pattern of differences between the “more spiritual than religious” respondents, who self-identify as non-theists (Focus Group 4), and those who do not (Focus Group 3). However, the difference on *introvertive mysticism* is small and insignificant, while the difference on *extrovertive mysticism* is slightly bigger but still not significant, but the difference on *interpretation* is significant and relatively large ($\Delta M = 0.50, p < .001$). This way, a profile of the more spiritual non-theists has emerged. For profiling the more spiritual non-theists in the other direction, namely in regard to the neither religious nor spiritual non-theists, the results demonstrate significant differences on all three factors of the M-scale (on *introvertive mysticism*: $\Delta M = 1.43, p < .001$, on *extrovertive mysticism*: $\Delta M = 1.35, p < .001$, and on *interpretation*: $\Delta M = .95, p < .001$). Thus, our results reveal extremely large differences between two kinds of

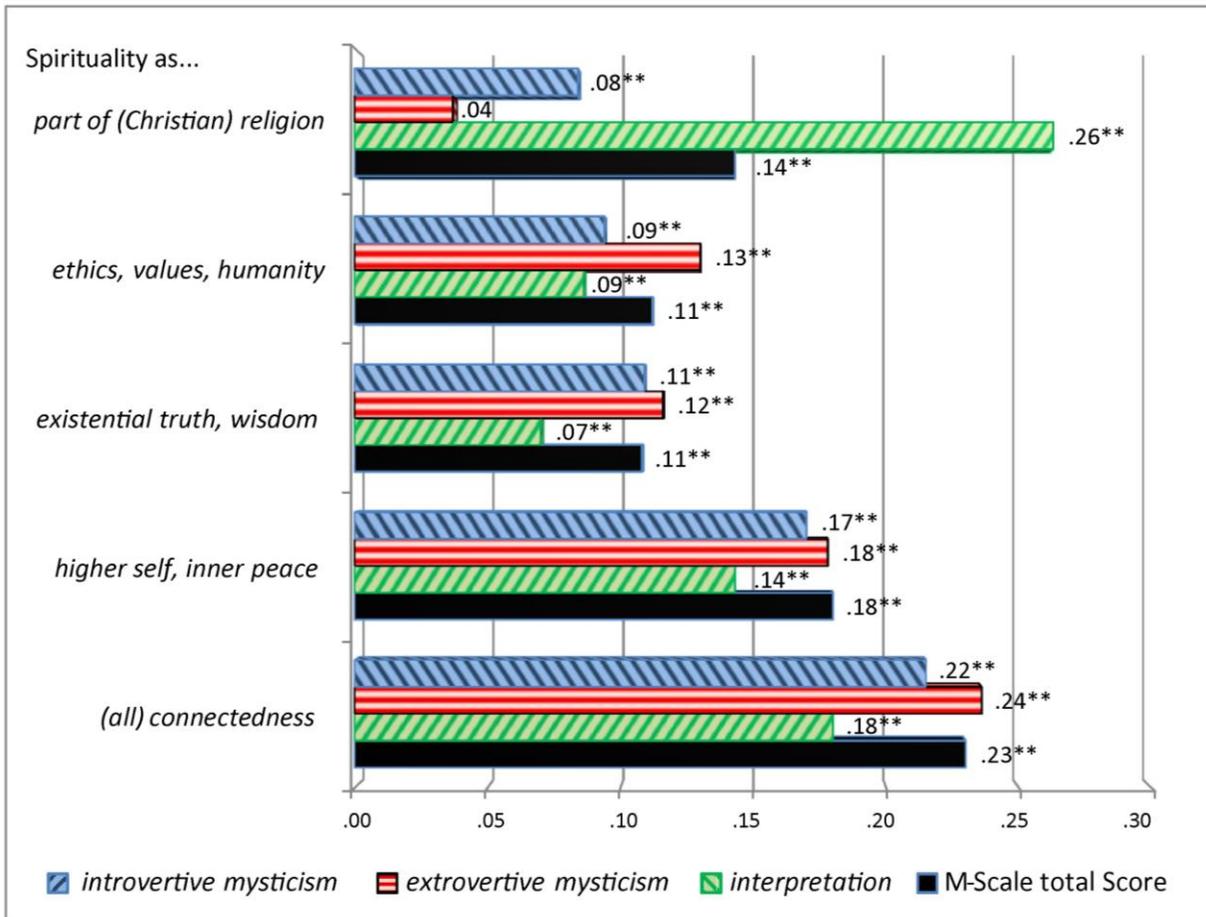
atheists: between those who self-identify as more spiritual than religious on the one hand, and those who self-identify as neither religious nor spiritual on the other hand. And the factors of the M-scale, especially *introvertive mysticism*, are useful in accounting for these differences.

Summing up, the M-scale and its three factors allow for differentially profiling patterns of subjective spirituality both within and outside of religion.

Associations with the Semantics of Spirituality

We also analyzed the relation between the M-scale's three factors and the semantic profiles of spirituality. As mentioned already, we have received a great number of answers ($N = 1779$, $n_{USA} = 1039$, $n_{GER} = 740$) to our invitation for respondents to enter their own definition of spirituality into the questionnaire. Content-analytic coding resulted in 44 categories, which were reduced in a factor analysis to ten dimensions, which we understand as the semantic dimensions of what our respondents understand as spirituality (Eisenmann et al., 2016; Streib & Klein, 2016). How do these dimensions relate to mysticism? Figure 3 presents significant results for five selected semantic dimensions from a correlation analysis.

An understanding of spirituality as part of (Christian) religion has relatively high correlations with *interpretation*, but very low correlations with *introvertive mysticism* and *extrovertive mysticism*, thus moderate correlations with the M-scale total score. For all other versions of the semantics of spirituality, correlations of *extrovertive mysticism* and *introvertive mysticism* are higher than the correlations of *interpretation*.



** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 3. Correlations between M-Scale Factors and Selected Semantics of Spirituality

Remarkable are the two blocks on the bottom of Figure 3. An understanding of spirituality as connectedness and harmony with the universe, nature, and the whole correlates relatively high with all three mysticism factors, but more so with *introvertive mysticism* and *extrovertive mysticism*. Similar in the pattern of mysticism factors but somewhat lower are the correlations of mysticism with an understanding of spirituality as inner search for a higher self, meaning, peace, and enlightenment. Thus, semantic variants of spirituality as (all)connectedness and a search for higher self/inner peace stand out as having highest correlations with the M-scale total, but especially with *introvertive mysticism* and *extrovertive mysticism*. While these semantic

dimensions of subjective understandings of spirituality appear to be most closely related to the core components of mystical experiences, the interpretation of such experiences shows the strongest association to an understanding of spirituality as part of explicit religion.

Construction and Validation of the 8-Item Mysticism Scale

As noted above, the usefulness of the M-scale in studies using several measures could be enhanced if a reliable and valid short version was available. To be consistent with previous research, the short version would have to reflect the three-factor solution and should cover the eight facets according to Stace (1960) and Hood (1975). Thus, for the construction of a short version of the M-scale, items were selected from the 32-item full version of the M-scale. Selection was systematic: from each of the eight facets, one item was selected; for the selected items, we considered their maximal contribution to the reliability of the eight facets and to the subscales of *introvertive mysticism*, *extrovertive mysticism*, and *interpretation*; we also paid attention that the means of the selected items did not extremely differ from subscale and facet means. This way, the short 8-item version of the M-scale was constructed. Items are included in the boxes in Figure 4 and put in bold print in the Appendix.

The next step was confirmatory factor analysis with the newly constructed short version of the M-scale. Figure 4 presents the results. The model presented in Figure 4 is based on the entire sample of $N = 2300$ respondents who for the first time answered the M-scale; the sample has been split into the US participants ($n = 1280$) and the German participants ($n = 1020$, numbers in italics after the slash). The model fits the data well ($\chi^2 = 402.44$; $df = 32$; $CFI = .95$; $RMSEA = .071$, upper bound = $.065$, lower bound = $.077$). Thus, we conclude that the data confirm the three-factor structure (*introvertive mysticism*, *extrovertive mysticism*, *interpretation*) for the short version of the M-scale also.

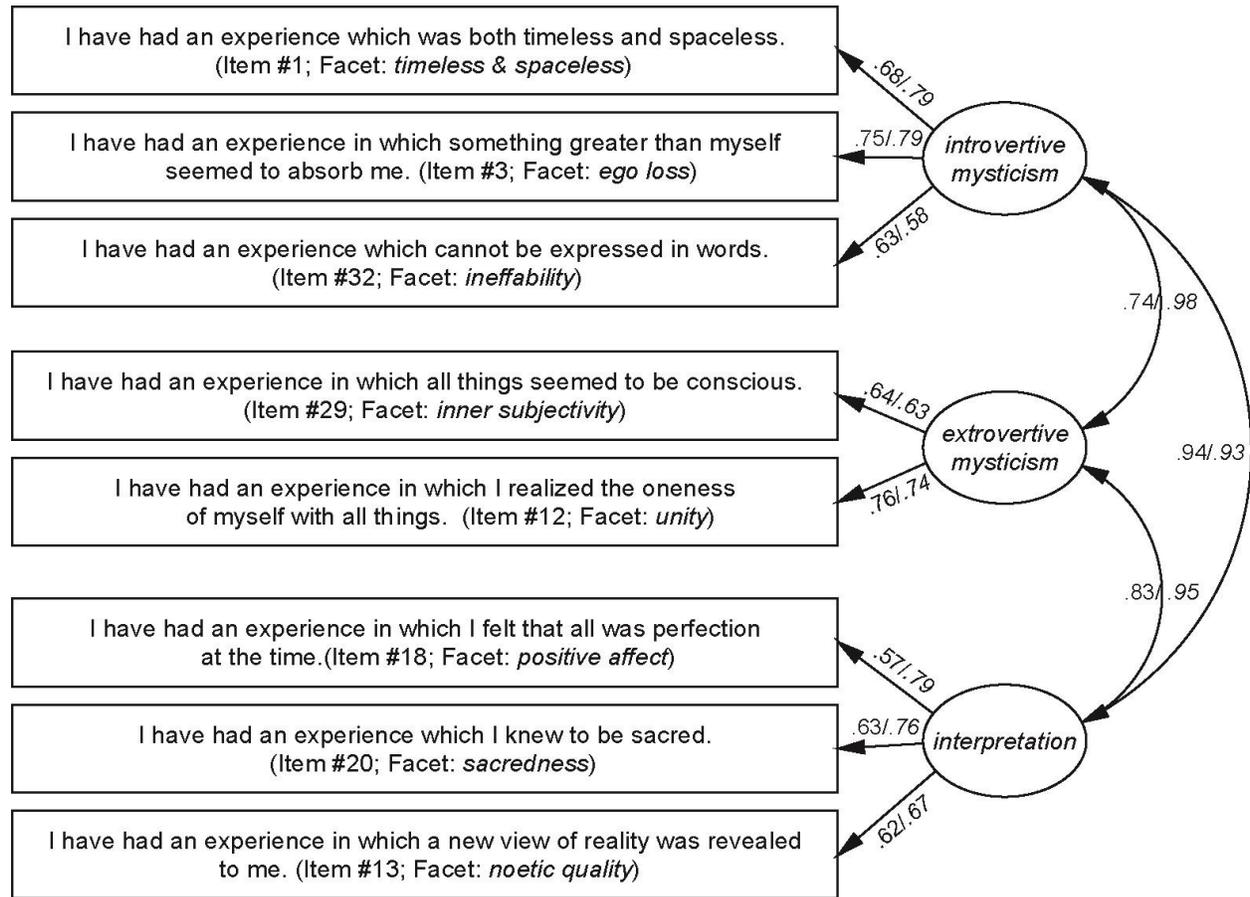


Figure 4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis with the 8-Item M-scale

In order to determine the efficiency of the short version of the M-scale as a measure for spirituality, we call attention to the effects that the answers to the eight mysticism items have on self-rated spirituality. We used again structural equation modeling and a hypothetical model corresponding to the model in Figure 1 in which the effects of the 32-item M-scale was estimated, but we entered the single items instead of the facets in the equation. (Because of the similarity, we do not include a separate figure for this estimation.) Results with this model with good fit indices ($\chi^2 = 369.93$; $df = 40$; $CFI = .96$; $RMSEA = .060$, upper bound = .066, lower bound = .054) indicate that the 8-item short version of the M-scale explains 24% of the variance in self-rated spirituality for the U.S. sample ($n = 1280$) and 41% for the German sample ($n =$

1020). Hence, we conclude that the short 8-item version of the M-scale is efficient as measure for self-rated spirituality, too.

Retest Reliability of the Mysticism Scale

As indicated in the description of the sample already, we have in our data set the longitudinal data from 290 participants, who answered the M-scale (and many other items and scales in our questionnaire) two times with a time distance of approximately five years (t_0 : 2010-2012; t_1 : 2015-2017). Based on this longitudinal subsample, we were able to run retest reliability analyses for both the 32-item and the 8-item version of the M-scale.

For the full 32-item version of the M-scale, the Cronbach's Alpha values are considerably stable between the two times of measurement, and they are on an excellent level for both the U.S. sample (M-scale-32 total: $\alpha_{t_0} = .96$, $\alpha_{t_1} = .96$) and the German sample (M-scale-32 total: $\alpha_{t_0} = .97$, $\alpha_{t_1} = .97$). For the short 8-item version, the picture is similar but on a slightly lower level, both for the U.S. sample (M-scale-8 total: $\alpha_{t_0} = .84$, $\alpha_{t_1} = .86$) and for the German sample (M-scale-8 total: $\alpha_{t_0} = .90$, $\alpha_{t_1} = .90$).

Correlations between the measurements at t_0 with measurement at t_1 are all strong for the full 32-item version of the M-scale for both the U.S. sample (M-scale-32 total: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .84$; *introvertive mysticism*: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .81$; *extrovertive mysticism*: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .76$; *interpretation*: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .81$) and the German sample (M-scale-32 total: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .86$; *introvertive mysticism*: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .77$; *extrovertive mysticism*: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .76$; *interpretation*: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .84$), indicating very good retest reliability. For the short 8-item version of the M-scale, these correlations are also strong although slightly lower for both the U.S. sample (M-scale-8 total: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .80$; *introvertive mysticism*: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .74$; *extrovertive mysticism*: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .75$; *interpretation*: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .75$) and the German sample (M-scale-8 total: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .85$; *introvertive mysticism*: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .76$; *extrovertive mysticism*: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .71$;

interpretation: $r_{t_0,t_1} = .81$). Thus, from the inspection of the correlations between the measurements at t_0 and t_1 , we can conclude that the M-scale has good retest reliability in both the full and the short versions.

Utility

It has been the main task of this chapter to provide support for the use of Hood's (1975) M-scale as a measure for subjective spirituality and introducing a short 8-item version of the M-scale for efficient use when the full version appears to consume too much space in a questionnaire. Results presented in this chapter add to the extant literature about the psychological properties and utility of the M-scale in several regards:

- The three-factor structure of the M-scale could be corroborated, and the three-factor structure could also be demonstrated for the new 8-item version of the M-scale using a sample of $N = 2300$ respondents. Thus, our results are in line and confirm previous evidence of the three-factor structure in various cultural contexts, but they increase evidence of the three-factor structure for Germany (compare Klein, et al., 2016).
- Retest reliability could be demonstrated to be good both for the full 32-item version and for the new 8-item version of the M-scale.
- Considerable effects of the M-scale on self-rated spirituality — explained variance between 21% and 41% — could be demonstrated for both the full and the short version for a sample of 2300 participants. This adds evidence to extant results about the effects of the M-scale on self-rated religion and spirituality (Klein et al., 2016) and confirms that the M-scale can really be considered to be a useful measure of subjective spirituality. This is additionally evidenced by the differential patterns of mysticism levels which

could be observed among the subgroups of the “(more) spiritual,” “(more) religious,” and “non-theists.”

- A particularly promising finding of our research regards the relation — and potential predictive function — of the M-scale, especially when attending to the pattern of the M-scale factors, on the different semantic variants of subjective understandings of spirituality. Introvertive and extrovertive mystical experiences are most strongly associated with the understanding of spirituality as (all) connectedness and as search for higher self/inner peace. The special role of *interpretation* as indicator for religion has been observed in previous studies (Chen, Qi, Hood, & Watson, 2012; Hood, 1976; Morris & Hood, 1980). These findings could be corroborated with our data. As our results show, the M-scale is able to cover a large array of common notions of spirituality.

Taking the three criteria for measures of spirituality described at the beginning of our chapter into account, we can summarize that the M-scale is a reliable measure with robust factorial structure that shows clear associations with basic measures of subjective spirituality. The scale reflects core elements of widespread subjective notions of spirituality, and, doing so, also allows for an assessment of subjective spirituality both within and outside of established religion (e.g., Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism).

Critique

Despite the very good properties of both versions of the M-scale, the amount of explained variance may not convince everyone in the field that the M-scale qualifies as general measure for spirituality. (Many scales explicitly claiming to assess spirituality associations with self-rated spirituality, however, have not at all been reported so far; see Klein et al., 2016.) Obviously insofar as spirituality like religion is a multidimensional construct, the M-scale is focused on the

report of subjective experience (introvertive, extrovertive) and basic interpretation (that may or may not be religious). Even when explicitly rejecting religious language, however, the person may remain implicitly religious, based on their experience and prefer spiritual language and self-attribution. Religious interpretations may be horizontal as well as and even in opposition to vertical transcendence.

It could be argued that the M-scale is a measure for subjective, non-conventional versions of spirituality that are preferred by the minority of individuals who self-identify as “more spiritual than religious,” or by an even smaller minority of “more spiritual than religious non-theists.” Nevertheless, the results from the semantic analyses show that many individuals who prefer spirituality for themselves strongly prefer an understanding of spirituality that is non-theistic and associated with experiences of all-connectedness, search for a higher self, existential truth, and humanistic morality. As we have seen, these semantic versions of spirituality correlate strongly with *extrovertive mysticism* and *introvertive mysticism* and less with *interpretation*. As demonstrated in Figure 2, the pattern of the three M-scale factors reflect different versions of being “spiritual.” For example, the more spiritual atheists are the group for which *introvertive mysticism* is higher than the other mysticism factors. Therefore, we conclude that the M-scale captures central properties of spirituality. Furthermore, Stace developed his universal core using descriptions both from within and outside faith traditions, and research using the M-scale has consistently sampled from both religious and non-religious samples. As noted above, the factor structure remains consistent across both faith and secular traditions.

This does not exclude the respondents who self-identify as “more religious than spiritual” or as “equally religious and spiritual,” but for them the pattern of the three factors is different: they give more weight to *interpretation* than to *introvertive* and *extrovertive mysticism*. The

understanding of spirituality as part of religion highly correlates with *interpretation*, as demonstrated in Figure 3.

Multicultural Applications

Drawing on the Common Core Thesis of mysticism (Hood, 2006), the three-factor model of the M-scale appears to be applicable not only in the Western (e.g., U.S.-American or German) context, but in other cultural and geographic contexts as well. In their own review of eight traditions across both history and cultures, which can be identified with totalizing worldviews, positive psychologists have noted that of six virtues, identified across eight traditions (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Among them, transcendence of self (mysticism) is explicitly mentioned in the Abrahamic faith traditions of the West (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism) and in the two explicit faith traditions of the East (Hinduism and Buddhism). Here we emphasize that not only did Stace develop his phenomenological analysis from texts representative of all these traditions (Stace, 1960), but also that Hood's three factor solution has been replicated in all these traditions as well. This includes Iranian Muslim samples (Hood et al., 2001), Jewish samples in Israel (Lazar & Kravetz, 2005), Chinese samples including Christians and Buddhist monks and nuns (Chen, Qi, Hood, & Watson, 2011; Chen, Zhang, Hood, & Watson, 2012), and an Indian sample including Hindus, Muslims, and Christians (Anthony, Hermans, & Sterkens, 2010). The three-factor structure of the M-scale has also been corroborated in the Bielefeld-based Study on Spirituality, which included a substantial number of religiously unaffiliated respondents both from the U.S. (28.9% of the US subsample) and Germany (48.0% of the German subsample; see Keller, Klein, Swahajor-Biesemann, & Streib, 2016). Finally, factorial structure, internal consistencies, and correlational patterns of the M-scale have also been confirmed in a widely representative German sample including 59.2% Christian and 37.9% unaffiliated study

participants (Klein, 2015). Thus, the cross-cultural evidence for the factor structure and further psychometric properties of the M-scale can be regarded as well-established in previous research.

Conclusion

Subjective spirituality should be measured differentially to account for its different semantic profiles, e.g., theistic and non-theistic self-understandings. The results presented in this chapter demonstrate that the M-scale contributes to such differential measurement with high reliability, validity, and a cross-culturally robust three-factor structure. Using the M-scale as a measure of spirituality focused on experience and its interpretation avoids the widespread problem of many extant measures that confound the assessment of spirituality with religiosity, Christian beliefs and practices, or aspects of psychosocial well-being.

We conclude that the M-scale can be used for a differential assessment of the various versions of self-identified spirituality. The semantic variety of spirituality is reflected in the pattern of the three factors of the M-scale. While the three-factor structure, reliability, validity, and utility of the M-scale has been demonstrated in many cultures, our research has added special evidence for the usefulness of the M-scale in cross-cultural research comparing German and U.S. respondents — cultures in which spiritual self-identification, in considerably large portions of the population, is a preference of the non-religious and non-theistic. For them, the spiritual language may have a particular semantic surplus.

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Hood's Mysticism Scale, 32-Item and 8-Item Versions

(Items in Bold comprise the 8-item version)

Rating

+2 This description is definitely true of my own experience or experiences.

+1 This description is probably true of my own experience or experiences.

0 I cannot decide.

-1 This description is probably not true of my own experience or experiences.

-2 This description is definitely not true of my own experience or experiences.

1. **I have had an experience which was both timeless and spaceless.**
2. I have never had an experience which was incapable of being expressed in words.
3. **I have had an experience in which something greater than myself seemed to absorb me.**
4. I have had an experience in which everything seemed to disappear from my mind until I was conscious of only a void.
5. I have experienced profound joy.
6. I have never had an experience in which I felt myself to be absorbed as one with all things.
7. I have never experienced a perfectly peaceful state.
8. I have never had an experience in which I felt as if all things were alive.
9. I have never had an experience which seemed holy to me.
10. I have never had an experience in which all things seemed to be aware.
11. I have had an experience in which I had no sense of time or space.

- 12. I have had an experience in which I realized the oneness of myself with all things.**
- 13. I have had an experience in which a new view of reality was revealed to me.**
14. I have never experienced anything to be divine.
15. I have never had an experience in which time and space were non-existent.
16. I have never experienced anything that I could call ultimate reality.
17. I have had an experience in which ultimate reality was revealed to me.
- 18. I have had an experience in which I felt that all was perfection at the time.**
19. I have had experience in which I felt everything to be part of the same whole.
- 20. I have had an experience which I knew to be sacred.**
21. I have never had an experience which I was unable to express adequately through language.
22. I have had an experience which left me with a feeling of awe.
23. I have had an experience which was impossible to communicate.
24. I have never had an experience in which my own self seemed to merge into something greater.
25. I have had never had an experience which left me with a feeling of wonder.
26. I have never had an experience in which deeper aspects of reality were revealed to me.
27. I have never had an experience in which time, place and distance were meaningless.
28. I have never had an experience in which I became aware of unity to all things.
- 29. I have had an experience in which all things seemed to be conscious.**

MYSTICISM SCALE

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30. I have never had an experience in which all things seemed to be unified into a single whole.
31. I have had an experience in which I felt nothing is ever really dead.
- 32. I have had an experience which cannot be expressed in words.**

Factors

Introvertive mysticism: **1**, 2R, **3**, 4, 6R, 11, 15R, 21R, 23, 24R, 27R, **32**

Extrovertive mysticism: 8R, 10R, **12**, 19, 28R, **29**, 30R, 31

Interpretation: 5, 7R, 9R, **13**, 14R, 16R, 17, **18, 20**, 22, 25R, 26R

Hood's Mysticism Scale, German Translation

1. **Ich habe eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der es weder Raum noch Zeit gab.**
2. Ich habe nie eine Erfahrung gehabt, die man nicht mit Worten ausdrücken kann.
3. **Ich habe eine Erfahrung gehabt, als ob etwas Größeres als ich selbst mich aufnehme.**
4. Ich habe eine Erfahrung gemacht, als ob alles aus meinen Gedanken verschwinde, bis ich mir nur noch einer Leere bewusst war.
5. Ich habe ganz tiefe Freude erfahren.
6. Ich habe nie eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der ich spürte, dass ich in allem aufgehe.
7. Ich habe nie vollkommenen inneren Frieden erlebt.
8. Ich habe nie eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der ich spürte, dass alles lebt.
9. Ich habe nie die Erfahrung von etwas Heiligem gehabt.
10. Ich habe nie eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der alle Dinge über ein Gewahrsein verfügten.
11. Ich habe eine Erfahrung gehabt, in der mir weder Zeit noch Raum bewusst waren.
12. **Ich habe eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der ich erkannte, dass ich eins mit allem bin.**
13. **Ich habe eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der mir eine neue Sicht der Wirklichkeit enthüllt wurde.**
14. Ich habe nie erlebt, dass irgendetwas göttlich ist.
15. Ich habe nie eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der es Raum und Zeit nicht gab.
16. Ich habe nie irgendetwas erlebt, das ich als letztgültige Wirklichkeit bezeichnen würde.
17. Ich habe eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der mir die letztgültige Wirklichkeit offenbart wurde.
18. **Ich habe eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der ich die Vollkommenheit von allem spürte.**

19. Ich habe eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der ich spürte, dass alles, was es auf der Welt gibt, zu einem großen Ganzen gehört.
20. **Ich eine Erfahrung gemacht, die ich als geheiligt erkannte.**
21. Ich habe nie eine Erfahrung gehabt, für deren Ausdruck mir die Sprache gefehlt hätte.
22. Ich habe eine Erfahrung gehabt, die mir ein Gefühl der Ehrfurcht hinterließ.
23. Ich habe eine Erfahrung gehabt, die man nicht mitteilen kann.
24. Ich habe nie eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der mein Selbst mit etwas Größerem zu verschmelzen schien.
25. Ich habe nie eine Erfahrung gehabt, die bei mir das Gefühl des Wunderbaren hinterließ.
26. Ich habe nie eine Erfahrung gemacht, die mir einen tieferen Einblick in die Wirklichkeit erlaubt hätte.
27. Ich habe nie eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der Zeit, Raum und Entfernung ohne Bedeutung waren.
28. Ich habe nie eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der ich eines Einsseins aller Dinge gewahr wurde.
29. **Ich habe eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der alle Dinge über Bewusstheit zu verfügen schienen.**
30. Ich habe nie eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der alle Dinge in einem großen Ganzen vereint schienen.
31. Ich habe eine Erfahrung gehabt, bei der ich spürte, dass nichts wirklich irgendwann tot ist.
32. **Ich habe eine Erfahrung gehabt, die man nicht mit Worten ausdrücken kann.**

This translation was produced in 2011 by the research team of the Bielefeld Center for Biographical Studies in Contemporary Religion. The translation has been controlled by back-translation. The German M-scale translation was first published by Streib and Keller (2015, pp. 257-258).