

SPIRITUALITY AND HAPPINESS IN CHILDREN

Spirituality, Religiousness, and Happiness in Children Aged 8 – 12 Years

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Abstract

The relation between spirituality and happiness was assessed in 320 children aged 8-12 from public and private (i.e., faith based) schools. Children rated their own spirituality using the Spiritual Well-Being Questionnaire and 11 items selected and modified from the Brief Multidimensional Measurement of Religiousness/Spirituality which reflected the children's practices and beliefs. Children's happiness was assessed using self reports based on the Oxford Happiness Scale Short Form, the Subjective Happiness Scale, and a single-item measure. Parents also rated their children's happiness. Children and parents rated the children's temperament using the Emotionality, Activity, and Sociability Temperament Survey. Children's spirituality, but not their religious practices (e.g., attending church, praying, and meditating), was strongly linked to their happiness. Children who were more spiritual were happier. Spirituality accounted for between 5-27% of the variance in children's happiness depending on the measures. Temperament was also a predictor of happiness, but spirituality remained a significant predictor of happiness even after removing the variance associated with temperament. The Personal (i.e., meaning and value in one's own life) and Communal (quality and depth of inter-personal relationships) domains of spirituality were particularly good predictors of children's happiness. These results parallel studies of adult happiness and suggest strategies to enhance happiness in children.

Theoretical approaches to understanding the processes that influence happiness include both bottom-up and top-down formulations (Diener, 1984; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Bottom-up formulations emphasize the role of external factors such as experience and demographics. Though studies often report that happiness is related to external factors (Stallings, Dunham, Gatz, Baker, & Bengston, 1997), the influence of many of these variables is modest (e.g., Argyle, 1999; Campbell, Convers, & Rodgers, 1976). Therefore, top-down formulations, in which characteristics within the individual are emphasized, have also been studied (Diener et al., 1999). Compared to external characteristics, several internal characteristics account for more of the variability in happiness. These internal characteristics include personality traits such as extroversion and neuroticism (Cheng & Furnham, 2001, 2003; Furnham & Brewin, 1990; Hayes & Joseph, 2003; Hills & Argyle, 2001a, 2001b; Neto, 2001; Pavot, Diener, & Fujita, 1990), and variables related to personality such as attributional stability (Cheng & Furnham, 2001), emotional stability (Hills & Argyle, 2001a), loneliness (Neto, 2001), locus of control (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998), and self esteem (Cheng & Furnham, 2003; Furnham & Cheng, 2000a, 2000b; Hills & Argyle, 2001b). Research with children has paralleled the findings with adults and adolescents, in showing that temperament is more strongly related to happiness than demographic variables (Holder & Coleman, 2008).

Spirituality and religiousness are additional internal characteristics that have been linked to happiness. Spirituality can be distinguished from religiousness. Spirituality refers to an inner belief system that a person relies on for strength and comfort whereas religiousness refers to institutional religious rituals, practices, and beliefs (Houskamp, Fisher, & Stuber, 2004). Studies of spirituality and religiousness have generally reported modest positive correlations between

these internal characteristics and subjective well-being including life satisfaction (Kelley & Miller, 2007; Zullig, Ward, & Horn, 2006), and happiness (Argyle, 2001; Francis, Jones, & Wilcox, 2000; Francis, Robbins, & White, 2003; French & Joseph, 1999). A meta-analysis of 56 studies indicated that overall, religiousness and happiness are positively but weakly correlated ($r = .16$) (Arygle, 2001). Based on a review of the literature on happiness, spirituality, and religiousness, Francis et al. (2000) concluded that the domains of church attendance, religious commitment, overall spirituality, satisfaction with church activities, religious beliefs, and attitude toward Christianity, all positively correlate with happiness. Similarly, six scales of religiousness (Religious Coping, Congregational Support, Religious Identity, Spirituality, Religious Practice, and Religious Belief) all positively correlated with happiness (Cohen, 2002). Only the scale, Knowledge of Religion, did not substantially correlate with happiness.

The relation between well-being and religiousness and spirituality has been observed in various age groups including adolescents and the elderly. For example, a study of adolescents, young adults, and older adults reported that people in all three age groups, who considered themselves to be religious, were happier than people who did not consider themselves to be religious (Francis et al., 2000). Pearce, Little, and Perez (2003) found that middle school students who attended church on a regular basis and students who rated themselves as being spiritual, reported fewer depressive symptoms than students who did not attend church or did not think of themselves as being spiritual.

However, studies have not always reported a relation between happiness and spirituality and religiousness (Francis, Ziebertz, & Lewis, 2003; Lewis, 2002; Lewis, Lanigan, Joseph, & de Fockert, 1997; Lewis, Maltby, Burkinshaw, 2000). In some cases, this failure to observe these relations may be attributable to methodological limitations. For example Lewis et al., (2000)

relied on a truncated range as their two samples were restricted to Anglican priests and members of the Anglican Church. Additionally, studies of the relation between happiness and spirituality and religiousness may be limited and produce inconsistent results because several of the questionnaires used only assess Christian faith and there is no single widely-accepted test of spirituality (Francis et al., 2003; Lewis, 2002; Lewis et al., 2000). Furthermore, how happiness is assessed may be important. For example, in a review of the literature, Lewis (2002) found that research utilizing the Oxford Happiness Inventory reported an association between happiness and religiousness whereas research utilizing the Depression-Happiness Scale did not.

Theories have suggested that spirituality and religiousness may promote happiness and subjective well-being in several ways (Ellison, 1991). For example, practicing religion (e.g., attending church) may increase social integration and support. Additionally, the development of an individual relationship with a god or divine being may promote happiness by reducing stress and improving coping strategies. Furthermore, religiousness and spirituality may provide meaning, coherence, and purpose in one's life. Moreover, adhering to a religious or spiritual belief, at least in adults, may enhance healthier lifestyle choices.

Although research has been conducted on the relation between happiness and spirituality and religiousness in adults and adolescents, this relation has not been well-studied in children. The present study investigated this relation in children. Children aged 8 to 12 years were selected because they are old enough to identify and employ emotions, including happiness, in multifaceted social arenas (Schultz, Izard, & Bear, 2004). Additionally, children can appreciate that different emotions, including happiness, are experienced at the same time, and like adults, they can attribute causal relations to emotions (Denham, 1998; Whitesell & Harter, 1989).

Spirituality and religiousness may promote happiness in children for similar reasons to those that promote happiness in adults and adolescents. For example, spirituality may increase social relations (Ellison, 1991), and social relations are critical factors in adults' happiness (e.g., see Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005) and have been associated with children's happiness as well (Holder & Coleman, in press). However, the factors associated with happiness in children may differ from those in adolescents and adults. For example, variables that are associated with well-being in adults, including job satisfaction (Tait, Padget, & Baldwin, 1989), marriage (Headey, Veenhoven, & Wearing, 1991), and spousal happiness (Stull, 1988), are not applicable to children. Additionally, the predictors of life satisfaction and happiness change with age. For example, scores from tests at school predict life satisfaction for children in Grade 2 but not in Grade 8 (Chang, McBride-Chang, Stewart, & Au, 2003). Additionally, research suggested that men with school-aged children defined their happiness in terms of their family life, but before and after this phase of the family life cycle, they defined their happiness outside of the family (Harry, 1976). Therefore, though happiness may be related to spirituality and religiousness in adolescents and adults, this relation may differ for children. By determining the nature of this relation in children, we may better understand individual differences in children's happiness and identify strategies to enhance their happiness.

Method

Sample

Seven hundred and sixty-one children from 4 public schools and 2 private schools participated. The private schools were faith-based schools, and though children were from a variety of religious and nonreligious backgrounds, Christian teachings were part of the daily school curriculum. Students were given packets containing information letters, consent forms,

and questionnaires for their parents. Of the 476 (63%) packets returned, 359 parents consented to their children's participation, 84 declined, and 33 questionnaires were returned completed, but with no consent form. Of the 359 positive consents, 320 (89%) children assented on test day, 13 (4%) declined, and 26 (7%) children were absent, resulting in a sample of 320 children (51% girls, 49% boys) aged 8-12 years ($M = 10.25$ years, $SD = .96$ years), and their parents. The age and gender of children were similar between the public and private schools.

Measurement

Spirituality was assessed in children using the Practices and Beliefs Scale which contained items selected and adapted from the Brief Multidimensional Measurement of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMRS) developed by the Fetzer Institute (1999). The BMMRS assesses multiple dimensions of spirituality and measures both traditional religiousness and non-institutionally based spirituality (Idler et al., 2003). Additionally, the Spiritual Well-Being Questionnaire (SWBQ) was used to assess children's spirituality (Gomez & Fisher, 2003). The current study used a multidimensional approach to investigate the relation between spirituality and happiness as recommended by several researchers (Emmons, 2006; Fisher, Francis, & Johnson, 2000; Houskamp, et al., 2004; Idler et al, 2003; Underwood & Teresi, 2002).

Happiness was assessed using both self report measures and ratings by the children's parents. Additionally, to assess the strength of the relation between happiness and spirituality, the children's temperament was also assessed. Temperament is widely recognized as the forerunner of personality (Rothbart, Ahadi, & Evans, 2000). Personality has been strongly and consistently linked to adults' happiness (e.g., Brebner, Donaldson, Kirby, & Ward, 1995; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998) and though not studied extensively, temperament has been linked to children's well-being including satisfaction (Huebner, 1991) and happiness (Holder & Coleman,

2008). Given the strong relation between happiness and personality, many studies now seek to determine whether variables of interest contribute to happiness beyond the influence of personality (e.g., Ciarrochi & Diener, 2006; Demir & Weitekamp, 2006).

Six questionnaires were administered. Three questionnaires assessed children's happiness: the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Short Form, the Subjective Happiness Scale, and the Faces Scale. Two questionnaires assessed spirituality and religiousness: Spiritual Well-Being Questionnaire, and the Practices and Beliefs Scale. One questionnaire assessed temperament: Emotionality Activity and Sociability Temperament Survey (EAS). Parents completed the EAS and the Faces Scale, while children completed all six questionnaires. Likert-type scales were used when appropriate because children understand these scales better than visual analogue scales even with explicit instruction (Shields, Cohen, Harbeck-Weber, Powers, & Smith, 2003). Children prefer responding to questionnaires by filling in circles and having more as opposed to fewer response options (Rebok et al., 2001), so questionnaires used circles and more response options.

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, Short Form (Oxford Happiness Questionnaire). This measure, developed by Hills and Arygle, (2002), uses eight items to assess happiness and a 6-point scale anchored with "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree." The items express how participants may feel about themselves (e.g., "I feel that life is very rewarding"). With adults, the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire has good internal consistency (e.g., $\alpha = .62$) and short-term test-retest reliability (e.g., $r = .69$ after two weeks) (Cruise, Lewis, & McGuckin, 2006).

Subjective Happiness Scale. This measure, developed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999), assesses subjective happiness from a global perspective and includes four items using a 7-point Likert-type scale (e.g., "Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:" 1 (less

happy) to 7 (more happy)). With adults, this measure shows high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha ranged from .79 to .94) and good test-retest reliability (e.g., after one month, $r = .90$) (Lyubomirsky & Lepper). It is a reliable ($\alpha = .85$) (Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006) measure of happiness, and shows convergent and discriminant validity (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). In order to adapt the questions to a Grade 4 reading level, Questions 3 and 4 that originally read, "To what extent does this characterization describe you?" were changed to, "How much does this sentence describe you?"

Faces Scale. The Faces Scale is a single-item measure, depicting seven simple drawings of faces, arranged in a horizontal line, that represent participants' response options to the question: "Overall, how do you usually feel?" Participants marked the face that best represented feelings ranging from "very unhappy" (depicted by a very down-turned mouth) to "very happy" (depicted by a very up-turned mouth). Single item measures of happiness are reliable, valid, and commonly used (Abdel-Khalek, 2006; Harry, 1976; Stull, 1988; Swinyard, Kau, & Phua, 2001). The Faces Scale is especially suitable for children because children as young as 3 years perform best when recognizing and labeling emotions when emotions are represented as schematic drawings as opposed to photographs, and they are best at labeling happiness, followed by sadness (MacDonald, Kirkpatrick, & Sullivan, 1996).

Using the Faces Scale, children rated their own happiness, and parents rated their child's happiness. The use of reports by knowledgeable others (e.g., parents rating their children) is reliable and valid means of assessing personality (Funder, 1991) and happiness or well-being (Lepper, 1998). Furthermore, Holder and Coleman (2008) showed good agreement between children's self-reports and parent reports of their children using the Faces Scale.

Emotionality Activity and Sociability Temperament Survey (EAS). This measure, developed by Buss and Plomin (1984), consists of 20 items using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not very typical/characteristic) to 5 (very typical/characteristic). There are five statements for each of the four domains: Emotionality (e.g., “tends to be somewhat emotional”), Activity (e.g., “is always on the go”), Sociability (e.g., “prefers playing with others rather than alone”), and Shyness (e.g., “tends to be shy”). The EAS is short and straightforward, is not affected by gender or age of the child being rated (Boer & Westenberg, 1994), and has been used extensively with clinical and community samples (Masi et al., 2003). Validity and reliability of parent reports are consistently found to be good (Masi et al.), however, Buss and Plomin (1984) found test-retest reliability correlations to be stronger for emotionality (e.g., .72) and activity (e.g., .80) than for sociability/shyness (e.g., .58).

Practice and Belief Scale (PBS). Eleven items were selected from the BMMRS which assesses spirituality and religiousness. The BMMRS exhibits good reliability and validity, and normative data is available for adult populations (Idler et al., 2003). However, some questions were eliminated that may not have been appropriate for children. For example, the question “What is your current religious preference?” was eliminated because parents often choose the religion for children aged 8-12 years. Furthermore, the language of each item was modified from the BMMRS so that they reflected a broader scope of spiritual beliefs and practices, and the wording was simplified so that it could be easily understood by Grade 4 students (e.g., “I desire to be closer to or in union with God” was changed to “I desire to be closer to a higher power”). Pretests of the PBS, using children not included in the present study, confirmed that the children could understand the items. Children were required to respond to each item using a 7-point Likert-type scale. For example, “I find strength and comfort in my religion/spirituality” was

rated from 1 (never) to 7 (very often). Three items from the PBS reflected the children's practice of their beliefs: 1) "How often do you go to a place of worship such as a church?" 2) "How often do you pray or meditate privately outside of church or other place of worship?" and 3) "I read religious or spiritual books or magazines." Four items reflected the children's belief in a higher power: 1) "I feel a higher power's presence"; 2) "I believe in a higher power who watches over me"; 3) "I feel a higher power's love for me"; and 4) "I desire to be closer to a higher power." Three items reflected spirituality's role in coping and everyday life: 1) "How often do you find strength and comfort in your religion or spirituality?" 2) "When you are worried or have a problem, how often do you depend on your religion or spirituality to help you?" and 3) "I try hard to use my religious or spiritual beliefs in all parts of my life." The final question assessed overall self-perception of religiousness or spirituality: "Do you think of yourself as a religious or spiritual person?"

Spiritual Well-Being Questionnaire (SWBQ). Spirituality was assessed in children using the SWBQ which was developed by Gomez and Fisher (2003) and based on Fisher's (1999) model of spiritual health. The SWBQ assesses four dimensions of spirituality: Personal (meaning and value in one's own life); Communal (quality and depth of inter-personal relationships); Environmental (sense of awe for nature); and Transcendental (faith in and relationship with someone or something beyond the human level). Research has indicated the SWBQ has high internal consistency, good convergent and discriminant validity, and support for construct validity (Gomez & Fisher, 2003).

Procedure

Permission was obtained from the school districts, school principals and teachers. Only children whose parents gave consent were included. Before the start of the survey, children were asked for their informed assent.

Children were given packets containing the Faces Scales and the EAS to take home to their parents. Children were assessed approximately 10 days after the parents. The questionnaires for the children were administered in classrooms or libraries and averaged 30-35 minutes to complete, with all children completing their surveys within 20-40 minutes. One or two researchers answered children's questions. Children were given a brief, standardized explanation of the purpose of the study and were instructed to read each question carefully, and to choose the response option that was most appropriate for them. Children were told that the term "higher power" referred to something such as God, Buddha, or universal power, in order to prevent children from interpreting the term as referring to a parent or teacher.

Data Analysis

Four measures of children's happiness were used in the regression analyses: 1) the children's ratings based on the faces scale (ChildOwnFace); 2) the parent's ratings of their child's happiness (ParentChildFace); 3) the short form of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle, 2002) completed by the children (ChildOHQ) and; 4) the Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirskh & Lepper, 1999) completed by the children (ChildSHS). The EAS (Buss & Plomin, 1984) domains, the SWBQ (Gomez & Fisher, 2003) domains, and the PBS were used as predictors of happiness.

The distributions of responses from the Faces Scales appeared to violate the assumption of normality (ChildOwnFace: Skewness = -1.09, Kurtosis = 1.54; ParentChildFace: Skewness = -.86, Kurtosis = 1.63). Distributions for both scales were best improved by reflecting the ratings

and computing natural logarithms (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2002) (ChildOwnFace: Skewness = -.14, Kurtosis = .66; ParentChildFace: Skewness = -.49, Kurtosis = .49). These transformed measures were used in the analyses below.

Although 320 parents consented, 13 cases (i.e., $n = 307$) were excluded from the analyses because participants either incorrectly completed, or failed to complete, the measures of happiness. Where appropriate, Bonferroni adjustments were used to set the conservative experimenterwise error level at $p \leq .0125$.








Results

Measures of Happiness, Gender, School, Temperament, and Spirituality

Measures of Happiness. For both children's and parents' ratings using the Faces Scale, at least 90% of the responses were within the three happiest categories (see Table 1). These findings were consistent with other studies that have used this Faces Scale as a measure of children's happiness (Holder & Coleman, in press; 2008). Each of the four measures of happiness, (i.e., ChildOwnFace, ParentChildFace, ChildOHQ, and ChildSHS), were significantly correlated with each other (see Table 2). Although these measures were correlated, the results did not indicate multicollinearity (e.g., $r \geq .70$) or singularity (e.g., $r \geq .90$) (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2002). Similar to the Faces Scales, happiness ratings based on the Subjective Happiness Scale and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire were relatively high on average (see Table 3 p.37)

Table 1.

Percentage of Respondents within each Category of the Faces Scale

							
ChildOwnFace	0	0	3	7	19	47	24
ParentChildFace	0	0	1	5	25	57	12

Note. Percentage of children’s self-ratings (ChildOwnFace), and parents’ ratings of their children (ParentChildFace) in each of the seven response options on the Faces Scale.

Table 2.

Pearson Product-Moment correlations between the Four Measures of Happiness

	ChildOwnFace	ParentChildFace	ChildSHS
ParentChildFace	.35*	-	-
ChildSHS	.60*	.33*	-
ChildOHQ	.44*	.29*	.46*

* $p < .05$; (2-tailed); **ChildOwnFace** = Child’s own happiness rating on the Faces Scale; **ParentChildFace** = Parent’s subjective rating of their child’s happiness on the Faces Scale; **ChildSHS** = Child’s own rating on the Subjective Happiness Scale; **ChildOHQ** = Child’s own rating on the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire.

Gender and School. Children's happiness ratings were generally higher for females than males (Wilk's $\lambda = .825$, $F(4,300) = 2.54$, $p < .05$) with a significant gender difference appearing only on the ChildOwnFace measure (see Table 3). Children in public schools had significantly higher ratings of happiness than children in private schools (Wilk's $\lambda = .964$, $F(4,300) = 2.79$, $p < .05$), with significant differences between school ratings appearing on the ChildSHS and ChildOHQ measures. The interaction between Gender and School was insignificant (Wilk's $\lambda = .975$, $F(4,300) = 1.89$, $p = .11$) on all measures of happiness.

Temperament and Spirituality. Based on the EAS, the average ratings from the five-point scales across all four temperament domains (see Table 3) ranged from 2.33 ($SD = 0.70$) to 2.46 ($SD = 0.83$). The average scores on the SWBQ ranged from 3.27 ($SD = 1.06$) to 3.85 ($SD = 0.63$) on a 5-point scale, and on the PBS was 3.81 ($SD = 1.68$) on a 7-point scale.

Correlations with Happiness

Pearson product-moment correlations and descriptive statistics were used to describe the relations between the happiness measures and items taken from EAS, SWBQ, and PBS (see Table 4). All spiritual/religiousness domains from the SWBQ and the total score from the PBS were positively correlated with all four measures of happiness. For the SWBQ, only the correlation between the Transcendental domain and the ChildSHS was not significant. The PBS was not significantly correlated with ParentChildFace, ChildSHS, and ChildOHQ. Neither of the two items from the PBS that referred to the frequency of religious practice ("How often do you go to a place of worship such as a church?" and "How often do you pray or meditate privately outside of church or other place of worship?") were significantly correlated with any of the four measures of happiness, $-.078 < r_s < .097$, $p_s > 0.05$.

The temperament domains Shyness and Emotionality were negatively correlated with all happiness measures, and Sociability and Activity were positively correlated with happiness.

Table 4

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations between Happiness Measures and Predictors

Questionnaires	Predictors	ChildOwnFace	ParentChildFace	ChildSHS	ChildOHQ
EAS	Shyness	-.13*	-.32*	-.21*	-.15*
	Emotionality	-.06	-.38*	-.15*	-.21*
	Sociability	.09	.16*	.18*	.10
	Activity	.13*	.27*	.18*	.15*
SWBQ	Personal	.44*	.20*	.38*	.48*
	Communal	.45*	.19*	.34*	.44*
	Environmental	.21*	.11*	.14*	.28*
	Transcendental	.21*	.12*	.10	.16*
PBS		.17*	.05	.08	.10

* $ps < .05$ (2-tailed) Questionnaires include the Emotionality Activity Sociability Temperament Survey (EAS), the Spiritual Well-Being Questionnaire (SWBQ), and the Practices and Beliefs Scale (PBS). Four measures of happiness were used: **ChildOwnFace** = Child's own happiness rating on the Faces Scale; **ParentChildFace** = Parent's subjective rating of their child's happiness on the Faces Scale; **ChildSHS** = Child's own rating on the Subjective Happiness Scale; **ChildOHQ** = Child's own rating on the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire.

Predictors of Happiness

Gender and School. The multiple regression analyses with four measures of happiness ($\alpha_{\text{experimentwise}} = .0125$) and the linear combination of Gender and School predicted a significant amount of variance ($R^2 = 0.03$) on ChildOHQ, $F(2, 304) = 4.88, p < .0125$, but not on ChildOwnFace, ChildSHS, or ParentChildFace, $F_s(2, 304) < 2.48, ps > .05$. School predicted

about 3% of the variance in ChildOHQ (see Table 5). This regression suggested that where a child attends school (private or public) and his or her gender were not strong predictors of the child's happiness.

Temperament. EAS temperament items predicted significant variance on ParentChildFace, ChildSHS, and ChildOHQ, $F_s(4,302) > 5.06$, $ps < .001$, whereas none of the EAS items predicted variance on ChildOwnFace, $F(4,302) = 1.98$, $p = .097$. The combined effect of the EAS items predicted 22.4% (ParentChildFace), 7.6% (ChildSHS), 6.3% (ChildOHQ), and 2.6% (ChildOwnFace) of the variance in children's happiness measures, respectively. The EAS domains, Shyness Activity, and Emotionality, were significant predictors of ParentChildFace variance, whereas Emotionality was the only significant predictor of variance on ChildSHS and ChildOHQ (see Table 5). Neither Shyness nor Activity showed a significant relation with ChildSHS and ChildOHQ happiness ratings. Sociability was the only temperament item that failed to predict variance on ParentChildFace, ChildSHS, or ChildOHQ. In summary, Emotionality, Shyness, and Activity were significant predictors of children's happiness.

Spirituality and Religious Practice and Beliefs. The SWBQ and PBS predicted all four measures of children's happiness, $F_s(5,301) > 3.02$, $ps < .0125$. These predictors combined accounted for 5%, 25%, 18%, and 27% of the variance in ParentChildFace, ChildOwnFace, ChildSHS, and ChildOHQ, respectively. However, the Personal and Communal domains were the only significant predictors of ChildOwnFace, ChildSHS, and ChildOHQ (see Table 5). The other spiritual domains (i.e., Environmental and Transcendental) and the PBS were not significant predictors of children's happiness.

Table 5

Standard regression coefficients (β) and semi-partials (sr^2) results for Children's Happiness with Temperament, Gender, School, and Spirituality items.

	ChildOwnFace		ParentChildFace		ChildSHS		ChildOHQ	
	β	sr^2	β	sr^2	β	sr^2	β	sr^2
Gender ¹	-.12	.01	.03	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
School	.05	.00	.04	.00	.12	.01	.18	.03*
Temperament								
Shyness	-.08	.00	-.18	.02*	-.11	.00	-.06	.00
Emotionality	-.03	.00	-.32	.09*	-.12	.01*	-.19	.03*
Sociability	-.03	.00	-.06	.00	-.11	.00	-.05	.00
Activity	-.09	.00	-.13	.01*	-.07	.00	-.07	.00
Spirituality								
Personal	.30	.04*	.14	.00	.34	.06*	.38	.06*
Communal	.32	.05*	.10	.00	.21	.02*	.25	.03*
Environmental	-.10	.00	-.03	.00	-.11	.00	-.01	.00
Transcendental	-.09	.00	.10	.00	-.16	.00	-.14	.00
Practice/Belief	.10	.00	-.08	.00	.07	.00	.03	.00

* $ps < .05$. Four measures of happiness were used: **ChildOwnFace** = Child's own happiness rating on the Faces Scale; **ParentChildFace** = Parent's subjective rating of their child's happiness on the Faces Scale; **ChildSHS** = Child's own rating on the Subjective Happiness Scale; **ChildOHQ** = Child's own rating on the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire.

¹ Regression results with Gender and School on ChildOwnFace, ParentChildFace, and ChildSHS were insignificant, $F_s(2,304) < 2.48, ps > .05$.

Hierarchical Regressions

A hierarchical regression was used to test whether Spirituality would predict happiness over any variance that was explained by Gender, School, and Temperament. To determine whether spirituality improves predictability of children's happiness, hierarchical regressions were performed with each happiness measure in several models. For each model Gender and School were entered into the analyses first, followed by the EAS domains, and spirituality/religiousness items (PBS & SWBQ) were entered last.

ChildOwnFace. Beyond any variance explained by Gender, School, and Temperament, Spirituality explained 22.5% of the shared variance in ChildOwnFace, $F(5,295) = 18.15$, $p < .001$ (see Table 6). The Personal domain explained 4.2% and the Communal domain explained 4.7% of the unique variance in ChildOwnFace. However, the unique variance explained by the Environmental, Transcendental, and PBS domains was insignificant. Therefore, it appears that beyond Gender, School, and Temperament, the Personal domain (i.e., developing a sense of identity, self-awareness, joy in life, inner peace, and meaning in life) and the Communal domain (i.e., developing love for other people, forgiveness toward others, trust between individuals, respect for others, and kindness towards other people) were important predictors of children's own happiness.

ParentChildFace. The regression model (see Table 6) shows that Spirituality was not a significant predictor of ParentChildFace variance, $F(5,295) = 2.33$, $p > .0125$. Neither PBS nor SWBQ domains could explain more than 1% of the unique variance in ParentChildFace ratings. However, Temperament accounted for almost 20% of the variance in ParentChildFace beyond

any variance that was explained by Gender and School, $F(4,300) = 19.34, p < .001$. That is, Emotionality explained 9.1% of the unique variance in ParentChildFace ratings, while Shyness and Activity explained 1.4% and 1% of the unique variance, respectively. Sociability did not explain a significant amount of unique variance in ParentChildFace. This outcome suggests that parents' temperament ratings were relevant to how parents rated their child's happiness.

ChildSHS. The model (see Table 6) shows that Spirituality items captured 15% of the shared variance in ChildSHS, which was beyond any variance explained by Temperament, Gender, and School, $F(5,295) = 11.47, p < .001$. The Personal, Communal, and Transcendental domains respectively explained 4.9%, 1.8%, and 1.2% of the unique variance in ChildSHS, whereas Environmental and PBS contributed less than 1% each to ChildSHS. Emotionality was the only significant Temperament domain in this model to predict unique variance ($sr^2 = .012$) on ChildSHS. The remaining Temperament domains along with Gender and School items were not significant predictors of ChildSHS ($ps > .08$). Beyond the contribution made by Emotionality, the Spirituality domains, except Environmental, predicted children's happiness. The Transcendental domain (i.e., developing a personal relation with a higher power, worship of the Creator, oneness with a higher power, peace with a higher power, and prayer life), along with the Personal and Communal domains, predicted ChildSHS.

ChildOHQ. Spirituality explains almost 26% of the variance in ChildOHQ beyond what was explained by Temperament, Gender, and School, $F(5,295) = 22.65, p < .001$ (see Table 6). Both the Personal and Communal domains predicted a significant amount of variance ($\Delta sr^2 = .089$) in ChildOHQ. Again, it appears that children's happiness was related to their Spirituality, particularly the development of their Personal and Communal domains. Furthermore, Emotionality captured 2.8% of the ChildOHQ variance, with no other significant Temperament

contributors ($ps > .05$). Finally, School accounted for 1.6% of the variance in ChildOHQ. (see Table 6 p.38)

Discussion

The relation between happiness and spirituality and religiousness was assessed in 8-12 year old children. In general, children who indicated that they were more spiritual were happier based on self-reports and reports by their parents. In particular, the Personal (i.e., meaning and value in one's own life) and Communal (quality and depth of inter-personal relationships) domains of spirituality were strong predictors of children's happiness. Spirituality accounted for 5-27% of the variance in children's happiness depending on the measures used. The strength of the relation is underscored by the finding that spirituality was a strong predictor of happiness even after the variance in happiness associated with temperament was removed. However, though spiritual beliefs were strong predictors of happiness, religious practice (e.g., attending church, praying, and meditating) were only weakly associated with children's happiness.

The positive relation between spirituality and happiness reported here for children is similar to that reported in studies of adults and adolescents. Argyle (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of 56 studies with adults in the United States and found an average correlation of .16 between overall spirituality or religiousness and happiness. Several studies have reported similar positive relations including that spirituality or religiousness is associated with life satisfaction (Kelley & Miller, 2007), happiness (Abdel-Khalek, 2006; Argyle, 2001; Francis et al., 2000; Francis et al., 2003; French & Joseph, 1999), and well-being (Ciarracchi & Deneke, 2006; Cohen, 2002). Ciarracchi and Deneke (2005) reported that spirituality contributed to well-being

when age, gender, personality, and religious support and practices were controlled for in an adult sample.

Cohen (2002) reported that when well-being was assessed with a single item (i.e., asking participants to rate their life in general on how happy they were), no relation was found between spirituality and well-being. However, when well-being was assessed with multiple items, a relation was found between spirituality and well-being. The present study measured happiness with a single and multiple item questionnaires, as well as with self and other ratings. The use of happiness ratings by knowledgeable others (parents) has been reported to be valid (Lepper, 1998) and the use of multiple measures of well-being has been advocated by other researchers (Diener et al., 1999). Though the measures of happiness were all correlated and all showed a positive relation with spirituality, the measures were not correlated at a level that indicated singularity. Furthermore, both the amount of variance in happiness that spirituality accounted for, and the subdomains of spirituality that were unique predictors, differed across measures of children's happiness. Future research should address the theoretical and psychometric distinctions among these measures.

Francis and colleagues (2000) suggested that church attendance is a predictor of adults' happiness. A meta-analysis (Hackney & Sanders, 2003) reported an overall correlation ($r = .10$) between religious variables and mental health. However, they found that attending a formal religious institution produced the weakest and only negative correlation. In the present study, frequency of religious practice (i.e., how often the children attended a place of worship and how often they prayed or meditated) was not significantly correlated with any of the four measures of happiness. One possible explanation for the lack of a strong relation may be that parents, and not the children, determine the frequency of children's religious practice. Kelley and Miller (2007)

reported church attendance did not predict life satisfaction for adolescents from different religious denominations as well as nonreligious self-identifications. Ciarrocchi and Deneke (2005) also reported church attendance and other religious activities did not contribute to well-being in graduate students. However, praying was linked to well-being in adolescents (Francis et al., 2003) possibly because adolescents are free to choose how often and when they pray.

Only recently have researchers tried to make a distinction between spirituality and religiousness as variables of interest in relation to health and well-being (see Berry, 2005). Although the present study did not ask children to make a distinction between spirituality and religiousness, some of the items included (e.g., church attendance or praying) have been used in studies of religiousness (see Bagley & Mallick, 1997; Francis et al., 2003; Pearce et al., 2003). Our finding of a strong relation between happiness and spirituality in children, but not between happiness and frequency of religious practice, suggests that spirituality and religious practice can be empirically separated. This separation supports the idea that these constructs are independent and indicates that research should consider them separately. In the case of children, it seems that spirituality, but not religious practice, contributes to their happiness.

Research reports that the relation between spirituality and religiousness, and happiness and subjective well-being, increases with age for adults (Ellison, 1991; Ferriss, 2002). Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that the relation between happiness and spirituality reported in the present study with children was stronger than that typically reported in adults (see Hackney & Sanders, 2003). Perhaps the stronger relation we observed in children is because research with adults may be methodologically limited. For example, research with adults purported to study spirituality is often limited by tests which only assess Christianity. Furthermore, research on adult spirituality is often based on samples drawn from populations

restricted to a single Christian denomination such as Anglican (e.g., Lewis et al., 2000). Though the current research was restricted to a sample drawn from a primarily (though not exclusively) Christian population, many Christian denominations were represented.

In addition to a strong relation between happiness and spirituality, the present research found a relation between happiness and temperament in children. Research with adults consistently reports that extraversion is strongly positively correlated with happiness and neuroticism is strongly negatively correlated with happiness (Furnham & Brewin, 1990; Furnham & Cheng, 2000b; Hills & Argyle, 2001b; Pavot, Diener, & Fujita, 1990). Buss and Plomin (1984) suggested that high levels of extraversion in adults are akin to high degrees of sociability and low degrees of shyness in children. Similar to the adult literature, we found that high levels of sociability and low levels of shyness are associated with high levels of happiness. Furthermore, Buss and Plomin suggested that high levels of neuroticism in adults are akin to high degrees of emotionality in children. Similarly, in the present study Emotionality was negatively correlated with all happiness measures.

Limitations.

In the present study, the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and the Spiritual Well-Being Questionnaire were used. Both questionnaires are designed, in part, to assess meaning and purpose in one's life which may have artificially inflated the observed relation between spirituality and happiness (see Kashdan, 2004). However, the relation was also observed when the Faces Scale was completed by the children and by their parents. This measure was not designed to assess personal meaning and, at least on the surface, does not assess it. Therefore the strong relation between spirituality and happiness does not rely on self-reports or measures of

happiness that intentionally measure personal meaning. Nonetheless, the use of these questionnaires was also limited because of the lack of psychometric data when using children.

The present study used multiple measures of happiness and spirituality, and found a strong relation between them. However, the sample of children was drawn from a population that was predominantly Caucasian and Christian. Cohen (2002) found that spirituality was related to well-being in Protestants and Catholics but not Jews. This finding indicates that the relation between spirituality and happiness needs to be investigated across different religious and ethnic groups. However, Abdel-Khalek (2007) investigated the relation between religiosity and happiness in a group of Kuwaiti Muslims and reported that 6.7% of the happiness variance was accounted for by religiosity in males and 7.5% in females. Though the sample consisted of adolescents not children, and emphasized religiosity and not spirituality, the results suggest that a positive relation between spirituality and happiness might exist across different religious groups of children.

Implications.

Researchers have identified several ways in which spirituality may promote subjective well-being (Ellison, 1991; Worthington, Kurusu, McCullough, & Sandage, 1996). Many of these ways may enhance well-being by increasing personal meaning in one's life. For example, spirituality may produce a sense of meaning that is worth living or dying for (Spilka, Shaver, & Kirkpatrick, 1985) and contribute to people setting positive social norms that elicit approval, nurturance, and acceptance from others. Furthermore, spirituality may increase social integration and support, and give a sense of the supernatural suggesting there is something better (Richards & Bergin, 1997). The idea that personal meaning promotes well-being is consistent with the finding that after controlling for demographic variables and religiousness, meaning in life was

related to lower levels of depression and risk-taking behaviours in adolescents who reported higher levels of spiritual well-being (Cotton, Larkin, Hoopes, Cromer & Rosenthal, 2005). Furthermore, meaning in life was strongly correlated with happiness in both Japanese and American samples of young adults (Steger, Kawabata, Shimai & Otake, 2008). The present study is consistent with the idea that spirituality is associated with children's happiness because spirituality is associated with increased personal meaning. In support of this idea, the two spiritual domains most strongly associated with children's happiness were the Personal and Communal which are related to personal meaning and one's relationships with others.

Enhancing personal meaning may be a key factor in the relation between spirituality and happiness, as experimental work indicates that strategies that enhance personal meaning promote happiness. For example, expressing kindness toward others may increase personal meaning and explicitly recording one's acts of kindness increases one's happiness (Otake, Shimai, & Tanaka-Matsumi, 2006). Furthermore, acts of altruism and volunteering, which may increase personal meaning, are associated with enhanced well-being including happiness (see Keyes & Waterman, 2003; Post, 2005).

If spirituality enhances happiness by increasing personal meaning, this may suggest strategies to enhance happiness. For example, strategies aimed at enhancing personal meaning in children's lives may promote happiness. Future studies could have children engage in activities that might promote personal meaning. For example, children might volunteer to help others or record their contributions to the community in a journal. Then changes in happiness and personal meaning before and after these activities could be compared. If personal meaning is critical to happiness, one might see that these activities particularly enhanced happiness for those children who showed increases in personal meaning.

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