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# Examination of the psychometric properties of the temperament and character inventory self-transcendence dimension

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## Abstract

Using a sample of 376 undergraduate students, the present investigation examined the validity of the Self-Transcendence Dimension of the Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI). Though evidence of reliability, criterion validity, and convergent validity for the total Self-Transcendence dimension was generally obtained, factor analysis of the TCI Self-Transcendence items provided marginal support for its five subscale structure. Based on additional factor analytic work, four revised subscales were developed for TCI Self-Transcendence. Labeled Spiritual and Religious Beliefs (SRB), Unifying Interconnectedness (UIC), Belief in the Supernatural (BSN), and Dissolution of Self in Experience (DSE), these subscales were found to produce scores of adequate to excellent reliability and all but DSE demonstrate strong associations with conceptually similar constructs. The paper concludes with a discussion of the meaning and implications of our findings for the TCI and future research on spirituality and personality. © 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Personality; Spirituality; Religion; Psychometrics; Questionnaires

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## 1. Introduction

Research exploring the place of spirituality within mainstream personality theory has been on the increase in current years (MacDonald, 2000; Piedmont, 1999; Saucier & Goldberg, 1998). Interestingly, only until recently have the realms of religion and spirituality been seriously

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considered as potential aspects of personality; for the past few decades, investigations have tended to look at the relation of religion and personality as though they were independent (though mildly correlated) aspects of human functioning (e.g. Taylor & MacDonald, 1999). Nonetheless, with the emergence of humanistic and transpersonal psychological theories describing the role of spirituality in identity formation (e.g. Maslow, 1971; Wilber, 1980) and, more importantly, due to the virtual explosion of interest in examining the implications of spirituality for health witnessed in medicine, nursing, psychology, among other disciplines, it appears that there is a growing impetus to find ways of integrating spirituality into conventional conceptualizations of the person.

### *1.1. Spirituality and the seven-factor model of temperament and character*

The seven-factor model of temperament and character devised and advocated by Cloninger and colleagues (e.g. Cloninger, Svrakic, & Przybeck, 1993) and assessed by the Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI) is the first major theory of personality to incorporate a spiritual dimension as a core component. Named Self-Transcendence, it is designed to embody “character” traits (i.e. learned aspects of personality as opposed to genetic dispositions in behavior and cognition which are identified as temperament) associated with spirituality as found in descriptions of personality development arising from humanistic and transpersonal psychologies. More specifically, Self-Transcendence is defined as “identification with everything conceived as essential and consequential parts of a unified whole” (Cloninger et al., 1993, p. 981) and was originally conceptualized as manifesting itself in a developmental process characterized by three stages which are called (a) self-forgetful versus self-conscious experience, (b) transpersonal identification versus self-differentiation, and (c) spiritual acceptance versus rational materialism. Initial empirical work on the TCI suggested that its 33-item Self-Transcendence dimension and three associated subscales held some potential to serve as an adequate operationalization of the construct which extended the boundaries of personality beyond other dominant comprehensive models such as the five-factor model (Cloninger et al., 1993). More recently, Cloninger (1996) has revised and expanded his model of self-transcendence to include two new elements (i.e. enlightened versus objective and idealistic versus practical), both of which are represented as subscales in a 51-item five subscale version of the dimension.

#### *1.1.1. Problems with TCI Self-Transcendence*

Though Cloninger’s efforts to address the spiritual within the context of personality may be seen as laudable, critical examination of his formulation as well as the extant literature reveals several problematic issues which impact upon its veracity and validity. For instance, there is some question as to the appropriateness of inclusion of self-transcendence as a wholly learned aspect of personality, especially in light of research which suggests that biophysiological (e.g. Persinger & Makarec, 1993) and genetic factors (e.g. Waller, Kojetin, Bouchard, Lykken, & Tellgen, 1990) may play a central role in its expression. In addition, despite the efforts of Cloninger et al. (1993) to do justice to humanistic/transpersonal theory, and contrary to the general position of such theory which maintains that spirituality is generally associated with health and advanced states of well-being, available published research using TCI Self-Transcendence suggests that it is linked to various aspects of pathological functioning (MacDonald, Friedman, & Kuentzel, 1999). In fact, based on this research, Cloninger, Svrakic, Bayon, and Przybeck (1999) have argued that

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