



RESEARCH PAPER 2

CHURCH, STATE, ELDER HEALTH AND SPIRITUALITY MEASUREMENT FOR PUBLIC POLICY

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What can research in the social and allied sciences tell us about core relationships between... spirituality...and policy concerns?

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Sigmund Freud believed that religion was “the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity,” and religious teachings were “neurotic relics” of primitive civilizations (Freud, 1928). Among the academic disciplines that arose in the 19th and 20th centuries to study the human condition, Freud’s understanding was widely shared. Today, new genres of academic research are emerging that challenge this long-held assumption, and the implications for public policy are many.

1. SPIRITUALITY AND PUBLIC POLICY

Religion in public policy has come to national center stage with the election of George W. Bush and his appointment of John Ashcroft as Attorney General, a politician known for the relation of his religious beliefs to his public policy views. National debate on this issue has risen to the popular level, as illustrated by recent National Public Radio programs. The Diane Rehm Show recently featured “Religion and the Bush Administration,” which endeavored to address what the public might expect, with regard to a government-religion partnership, from the new president (Rehm, 2001). Rehm featured the Brookings Institution’s E. J. Dionne, co-editor of a new book on religion and government (Dionne & Dilulio, 2000). A week later Talk of the Nation, hosted by Juan Williams, devoted a program to “Bush and the New Faith-Based Executive Office” to discuss “The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.” This new program will distribute billions of dollars in social service funding to religious organizations (Williams, 2001).

The changing condition of the church-state relationship raises fundamental policy questions, including ones of a related but different kind than usually raised: What can research in the social and allied sciences tell us about core relationships between religiosity and spirituality on the one hand, and policy concerns such as health, addiction, rehabilitation, life quality, or business ethics and profit on the other? Such questions imply that there is real or potential public policy value to be gained from the more esoteric areas of religious, or spiritual, life. However, if knowledge of strategic policy value is to be derived from religious resources, predictive assessment of the outcomes of religion-based approaches to social problem solving will have to be achieved. In some areas of research it is sufficient to demonstrate a correlation between applied religion approaches and the efficacy of outcomes. In others, however, investigation must begin at the level of basic re-

search by asking and answering questions with a less obvious, but real, relationship to public policy. For example, is it possible to statistically define and measure religious phenomena? If yes, we may reasonably expect that applications will follow and that the relationship between religion and policy will deepen. This will present new challenges to our national genius for sustaining a separation of church and state, while, nonetheless, angling to enjoy the benefits of an open market policy relationship between these sometimes adversarial pillars of American democracy.

This paper discusses the potential policy linkages of research that the authors have undertaken to identify, measure, and apply knowledge from a spiritual domain. The work, still in progress, began at the level of basic research, with no application apparent on the face of it. It is now in a second phase, in which the basic findings from the first phase are being tested to assess their usefulness in predicting physical and mental health.

This discussion is organized to be read according to the time available and degree of depth desired by the reader. The reader with little time can read sections 1, 2, and 5 for an overview of the issues. Considering, however, that the place of religion in public policy is controversial, and that the measurement of spiritual phenomena is new, the intervening sections provide a fair introduction to the methods, findings, and plans of the research here reported. The aim of this research is to measure the phenomenon of *spiritual integration* (SI) and assess its potential applications in public life.

2. THE RESEARCH CONTEXT AND SPIRITUAL INTEGRATION

The authors' research is with Catholic nuns and monks of the Benedictine Tradition. It is represented by monasteries (*houses*) that are today identified as Benedictine (OSB), as well as ones belonging to the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance (OCSO), commonly known as Trappists.² All Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries trace their origin to 6th century Italy to a common founder, St. Benedict. The ancestors of the Trappist Cistercian branch diverged from other Benedictines in the 11th century, creating a new order. The diverse monastic orders in the Benedictine tradition adhere to the Rule of St. Benedict, written about 525 bce and an influential classic of Western civilization (Fry, 1981). The Rule ordains regular hours for community and private (silent) prayer, alternated with hours of ordinary labor. The daily, weekly, and annual regimen of the monastic is regulated by a strict *horarium*, while her, or his, work may involve many varied activities.

The Benedictines involved in this research are represented by one house of men and one of a women. The two Benedictine houses are large, with nearly 200 members each, and both are involved in active work that takes many members outside their monasteries for long periods. By contrast, Trappist Cistercian houses are uniformly enclosed, with no members working outside the monastery. The Trappist Cistercians in this study belong to one of the largest houses in the OCSO, with approximately 80 members.

Until 1998, when the first phase of Fetzer Institute funding was approved, this work consisted entirely of basic (non-applied) ethnographic research intended to produce scholarly anthropological analyses and interpretations of monastic cultures. Following feasibility research sponsored jointly by the Fetzer Institute and the National Institutes of Aging (NIA), Fetzer undertook a modest program to fund research that would advance method and theory in the definition and measurement of spirituality and religiousness, as these relate to health and aging (Fetzer, 1999). Fetzer and NIH recognized the power of qualitative methods to uncover the complex nuanced beliefs, motivations, and behaviors found in religious cultures, and they understood that such methods must be used if predictive models were to be developed in such areas of research. But they did not bypass the essential fact that quantitative, statistically valid, methods would remain essential for successful clinical applications. They wanted investigators whose qualitative findings would lead to predictive, quantitative results.

Spiritual Integration... may be defined as a way of understanding, behaving, and being that operates on a principle of integrated wholeness...

Fetzer, and NIH, were not interested in pure humanistic research that began and ended with discoveries about the spiritual lives of nuns and monks. They would fund research that combined qualitative, humanistic knowledge about religious culture with quantitative, scientific knowledge that actually measured religious and spiritual phenomenon. More than this, however, they required that the models of spirituality/religiousness developed be tested to determine their value in predicting the health status of older citizens. By linking basic (pure) research and applied research, they sought answers to some questions about how best to deal with the health of baby boomers throughout their old age, one of the pressing policy issues looming on the immediate horizon.

Considerable knowledge already exists in this area. Regular churchgoers, for example, enjoy better physical health, on average, than non-church attending people (Levin, 1994; Levin & Vanderpool, 1987). Similar results have been found for psychological well-being among college students (George, 1998) and among elder women diagnosed with breast cancer (Feher & Maly, 1999). One recent study found that scores on two spirituality measures predicted the healthy blood pressure levels among Judeo-Christian women (Hixson, Gruchow, & Morgan, 1998). And an insurance industry study found that ordained Catholic religious, priests and nuns, live longer, healthier lives than their age mates in the general population (Arthur Andersen, 1996). Along similar lines, a large sample, multi-year study by researchers at the Duke University Medical School found that private–non-church going–religious activity prolonged the lives of active older people (Helm, Hays, Flint, Koenig, & Blazer, 2000). Ellison and Levin have reviewed work in this emerging area of research, providing a critical evaluation of findings and of research methods (Ellison & Levin, 1998). Results of like kind have been found in relation to more diverse aspects of health, generally indicating the adaptive impact of religious practice on health and well-being among people of diverse ages (Koenig et al., 1998; Krause, 1998; Strawbridge, Cohen, Shema, & Kaplan, 1997; Varon & Riley, 1999). But not all results have been conclusive and the validity of some has been challenged (NCRHI, 2000; Oman & Reed, 1998).

Regular churchgoers, for example, enjoy better physical health, on average, than non-church attending people.

Concerning the measurement of spiritual conditions, some advances have been made, and many of these are discussed in a recent report by the Fetzer Institute (Fetzer, 1999). Based on work done in the 1960's and 1970's, a test was developed that shares some resemblance with the SI findings, is the "Intrinsic Religious Motivation Scale" (Hoge, 1972; Hood, 1971; Hunt & King, 1971). Similar work was recently resumed by Pargament, resulting in a measure of "Religious/Spiritual Coping" that gets at internalized religiousness (Pargament, 1999).

To Fetzer the authors proposed to define and measure a spiritual condition—spiritual integration (SI)—that is both transforming for those who learn and practice it and flexible in application. To define and measure this spiritual approach they enlisted the participation of practitioners of one of the sources of such knowledge, Christian nuns and monks of the ancient Benedictine tradition, in which diverse ways of attaining spiritual integration have been taught since time immemorial.

From ethnographic research (community participation and dialogue) involving six monasteries, equally divided by gender, it was believed that a powerful, time-proven spiritual way of understanding and living one's life had been identified. This orientation the researchers labeled *spiritual integration* (Reidhead, Reidhead and Hurwicz, 1999). If this could be defined and measured, might it contribute to better health? If so, could it be taught to older people?

3. MEASURING SPIRITUAL INTEGRATION

Spiritual Integration (SI) may be defined as a way of understanding, behaving, and being that operates on a

principle of integrated wholeness, in which the parts of one's life are unified into a common field of spiritual understanding and practice. As practiced by senior monastics, SI requires a prayerful, God-centered orientation toward life. This outlook, and stance, cultivated in monasteries since ancient times (Reidhead, 1993), equalizes and spiritually elevates everything in a person's life, from mystical encounters, to the most ordinary work assignment, to all stripes of personal pain and suffering.

It was proposed that one way to get a fix on SI would be to statistically verify its existence and define it among a diverse group of senior monks and nuns. Working with nuns and monks, people who belong to communities aimed at enculturating their members for lives defined by spiritual integration, would eliminate the noise of extraneous variables that would be expected of any effort to isolate the phenomenon in the general population. By selecting a study group composed entirely of senior nuns and monks, women and men whose adaptations to monastic life were long established, the investigative methods would further reduce the intrusion of variables that could distort the findings. By selecting a study group that included members of monasteries with active ministries in the outside world, but also from those whose lives are spent cloistered from society, confidence would increase that the findings represented a cross-section of monastic approaches and cultures.

A full technical account of findings that follow was reported at the 1999 Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America (Reidhead, Reidhead, and Hurwicz, 1999). The third author of this report (Hurwicz) developed the sequence for capturing the spiritual integration cultural domain using free listing, and for verifying the domain using a procedure to collect more systemic data.

TABLE 1
Definition: Synonyms for Spiritual Integration,
Distribution of Frequent Free List Responses
 (N = 29)

Synonyms for Spiritual Integration	Number Listing
God-centered	19
Balance	18
Reconciliation with Self and Others	17
Growth, with Openness to Change	16
Attentive to Needs of Others	14
Freedom to Take Risks, with Responsibility	14
Acceptance of Difference	12
Hope, Perseverance	12
Love, Compassion	12
Contemplation	11
Generosity	11
Prayer	11
Surrender, Patience in Suffering	11
Meaningfulness in Life	10

Synonyms: How Nuns and Monks Define Spiritual Integration

The first task in developing a method to measure SI was to establish its existence among the sample population of monastics. A group of five senior monastics, two women and three men, from three monasteries in different states were recruited to work as key research consultants on the project. The consultants recruited 24 additional informants, bringing the total to 29, adequate for the analytic techniques that had been selected, as will be seen shortly. All 29 informants were senior members of their houses, each with many years in solemn vows.³

Each of the 29 informants was asked to make two lists (free lists) consisting of every word and phrase they could think of that defines spiritual integration. First, they were to make a list of the synonyms for spiritual integration, and second a list of adjectives and phrases that describe the ways of thinking and behaving of people who have spiritual integration in their lives. In this way, data were gathered using a method that assured the freedom of each participant to list whatever came to mind that she/he believed described SI. This approach protected consultant answers from bias on the part of the research team, and assured that answers came from the individual and collective knowledge of monastic culture(s).

Under synonyms for spiritual integration the monastic participants produced a total of 389 responses, ranging from 4 to 35 per person, with a mean list of 13 items. When free lists are solicited from people who share a common culture and knowledge about the subject under investigation, there are many identical and similar responses. When the same item, or ones closely related, was free-listed by 2 or more informants, these shared definitions were lumped into a common category. Table 1 shows each response that was shared by at least 10 people. Of the 389 individual responses, 186 (48%) are accounted for in Table 1. While no single response adequately defines SI, the list in Table 1, considered as a whole, provides a fair composite idea of how the 29 nuns and monks in the study defined it.⁴

It is easier to understand what monastics mean by SI when the data in Table 1 are translated into normal sentences. Thus, it can be said that ‘Spiritual integration centers a person in a balanced, open, forgiving manner of relating to oneself and others that is both generous and attentive to people’s needs regardless of human

TABLE 2
Spiritual Integration Behaviors:
Distribution of Frequent Free List Responses
(N = 29)

Spiritual Integration Behaviors	Number Listing
Caring/Loving: forgiving, upbuilding, empowering	27
Accepts Self/Others: non-judging, open, open to take risks and be wrong, growing, realistic, eager to learn, accepts ambiguity and grows through it, unprejudiced, accepts difference	26
Prayerful: can be alone, in church, silently, discursively, meditation, contemplation, etc.	23
Relational: makes time for people, has reverence for people and things, connected, committed, listens, is loyal and trustworthy in community-minded way, can laugh at self because sees self in larger context of relationships, not self-absorbed, incorporates community worship	23
Generous: sharing, gracious, charitable, hospitable, in balanced, non-dependent, non-self-abusive way, able to draw boundaries, healing	22
Sense of Meaning and Purpose/is hopeful, trusts in God’s providence: manifestations: trusts own experience, able to make own decisions freely, is focused, balanced priorities, is productive	20
Joyful/grateful: “happy,” content, optimistic, positive, pleasant, at peace with self	18
Calm/Even-tempered/Steady: pleasant, trusting, unrepressed tact with others	12
Patient in Suffering: at ease with adversity, accepts own vulnerability, accepts suffering	12

difference. It makes one confident in the future, despite doubts, and this, in turn, gives one the freedom to take risks and to accept the challenges for personal growth and responsibility this entails. Spiritual integration infuses one's life with purpose, giving meaning to ordinary tasks and to every encounter. It even transforms the sufferings of life, rendering them meaningful, despite the violence of their random occurrence. Spiritual integration is founded in prayer and time for contemplation in silence.'

TABLE 3
Sample of Recognition Protocol Questions, with Free List Frequencies

Questions	Free List Frequency
1. Taking a loving, compassionate, and forgiving approach toward others is: a) a necessary attribute of the spiritually integrated person. b) not necessary but is probably a common attribute of the spiritually integrated person.	27
2. Being God-centered is: (Insert a, b, and c responses from above)	19
3. Freedom to take risks, aware that one is accountable for her/his own actions is:	14
4. Reading works by the spiritual masters is: (Insert a, b, and c responses from above)	1
5. Able to push one's own agenda, knowing that each person is responsible for her/himself is: (Insert a, b, and c responses from above)	0

At this juncture, it is reasonable to assume that people who embody a substantial number of the values prescribed above will, on average, live productive, healthy, satisfying lives, contribute effectively to the community, consume less for mental and physical health care than their neighbors, and die well. Indeed, as reviewed above, there is a substantial body of literature that now suggests that intrinsically religious people enjoy these health and life benefits to a greater degree than those who do not have the support of a religious orientation to life (see Literature Cited and Suggested Readings, below).

Behavior and Personality Attributes of People Working on Spiritual Integration

The list of behaviors and personality traits that the study group provided to describe people who are actively working toward SI replicated many aspects of the definition they provided for SI. They were not asked to list the traits of people they would consider *fully* integrated, but those who are working on becoming spiritually integrated. Collectively, they produced 408 responses, ranging from 3 to 29 per person, with an average of 14 attributes apiece. As with the definition of SI, many items were found to be the same as some of those that others had listed, and these were combined into categories attributed to more than one person. Out of 408 attributes, 183 (45%) fit into the 9 categories in Table 2. This table shows all of the categories listed by at least 10 people; the lowest response was by 12 individuals, the next in line having a frequency of 9 is not shown here.

Consensus analysis provides a well-tested procedure for assessing whether a sample of people shares a common knowledge about something that is claimed to be part of their culture.

Listing the actions and personality traits expected of real people was a more difficult task for the consultants than the theoretical job of defining SI. This is seen in Table 2, where the responses are more complicated than in Table 1. Table 2 lists the behaviors and personal traits that the monastic consultants felt they had experienced in real people who were trying and succeeding, at some level, in the development of spiritually integrated lives.

The behaviors and traits in Table 2 typically consist of an umbrella behavior, listed first, in title case, with closely related attributes listed after the colon. Behaviors listed after the colon are ones that the key consultants collectively believed should be subsumed within the umbrella item. For example, the second category, "Accepts Self/Others," was believed to incorporate such behaviors as being "non-judging, open to take risks and be wrong, growing, realistic, eager to learn, accepts ambiguity and grows through it, unprejudiced," and "accepts difference." Decisions to include items that sometime appear different from the lead trait were made by consensus of the researchers and key informants together, through a thorough discussion of every listed item.

Except for the observation that the categories in Table 2 are organized differently than in Table 1, the contents of the two are almost the same.⁵ If a description of how a mature SI person should behave were written out, it would look like the definition of spiritual integration that was translated above, from Table 1. Instead, however, of saying, "This is what spiritual integration is," the statement would read, "This is how a spiritually integrated person thinks and acts." There is, however, one major difference between the results of definition listings (Table 1) and thoughts and behaviors (Table 2). When it came to considering what SI people do, the consultants strongly emphasized the community aspect of a person's spirituality. While this existed as a subtext in their definition of SI, in spelling out the ways a spiritually integrating person will think and act, they left no room for doubt that regular, healthy, committed community relations are an indispensable piece in the SI puzzle.

4. TESTING THE RESULTS

Questionnaire Construction

The results in Tables 1 and 2 were used as the starting point for proceeding toward statistically tested results. This involved a methodologically proven sequence of procedures. First, the categories and subcategories of knowledge gained from the free lists (Tables 1 and 2) were converted into questions about what does and does not conform to the qualities of being a spiritually integrated person. The result was a questionnaire with 73 questions, which was administered to the original 29 consultants. The purpose of this procedure is singular, to identify a statistically reliable set of qualities that can be expected in people who are working on SI. This involves identifying, from the way the answers to the questions cluster together, or stand alone, which consultants are culturally competent in their understanding of spiritual integration. The method requires that the answers of those who are not competent be removed from consideration, an obvious, practical necessity if a valid and reliable test of SI is to be achieved. The criteria for SI are then statistically identified from among the answers of consultants who share a common understanding of what SI is and how it plays out in actions.

Table 3 shows how the attributes of SI were restated to allow each consultant to select which one among three alternative statements of fact she/he found correct. Five examples are given.⁶ Questions were made from every item that was listed by a large number of the monastic consultants, as with the top three questions in Table 3. Every item in Tables 1 and 2 was used in the questionnaire, plus many not listed in this report. Additionally, a large selection of low frequency items, such as number 4 in Table 3, was included. Further, the researchers invented some questions, for example number 5, and used these as a way of checking the consistency of consultant answers.

TABLE 4
Results of Consensus Analysis of Recognition Protocol: Items Selected as
Necessary Attributes of the Spiritually Integrated Person(
N = 26)

Spiritual Integration Domain Item	Number Listing	Consensus
1. Being god-centered	26	Yes (1.0)
2. Being attentive to the needs and suffering of others	26	Yes (1.0)
3. Having a wholesome sense of morality	26	Yes (1.0)
4. Seeing meaning in life	26	Yes (1.0)
5. Taking a loving, compassionate, and forgiving approach toward others	25	Yes (1.0)
6. Acceptance of one's own limitations and those of others	25	Yes (1.0)
7. Possessing hope and perseverance	25	Yes (1.0)
8. The practice of self-discipline	25	Yes (1.0)
9. Being growth oriented, with an openness to change	24	Yes (1.0)
10. Being prayerful	24	Yes (1.0)
11. Being joyful, with a grateful, positive attitude toward life	24	Yes (1.0)
12. Being reconciled with oneself and others	23	Yes (1.0)
13. Freedom to take risks, aware that one is accountable for her/his actions	23	Yes (1.0)
14. Acceptance and tolerance of differences	23	Yes (1.0)
15. Being generous in relationships with other people	23	Yes (1.0)
16. Acceptance of one's own suffering	22	Yes (1.0)
17. Belief in the basic goodness of human beings, despite contrary indications	21	Yes (1.0)
18. Taking a peaceful, nonviolent approach to life	21	Yes (1.0)
19. Being relational, with commitments and time for people	21	Yes (1.0)
20. Understanding that death is as natural as living – and accepting it	21	Yes (1.0)
21. Making peace with one's circumstances	21	Yes (1.0)
22. Leading a balanced life	21	Yes (1.0)
23. A sense of humor	20	Yes (1.0)
24. Being focused on priorities	18	Yes (1.0)
25. Regular reading/study of the scriptures	18	Yes (1.0)
26. A willingness to work	18	Yes (1.0)
27. Enjoyment of the ordinary	18	Yes (1.0)
28. Being observant of the monastic schedule	17	Yes (1.0)

(Table continued on next page)

Probability = 99% at .99 confidence level (99% of the questions are correct at the .99 level of confidence.)

Table 4
(continued from previous page)

Spiritual Integration Domain Item	Number Listing	Consensus
29. Having an appreciation of the past	17	Yes (1.0)
30. Regular worship with other people	17	Yes (1.0)
31. Being a friend to both men and women	15	Yes (1.0)
32. Keeping both the intellect and emotions under control (through discipline, not denial)	14	Yes (1.0)
33. Not being pushy	14	Yes (1.0)
34. Avoiding over-work and excessive stress	14	Yes (1.0)
35. Being passionate (having passion for what one does)	13	Yes (.996)
36. Being calm and even-tempered	13	Yes (.995)

Consensus Analysis

A technique called Consensus Analysis was used to statistically analyze the questionnaire results. Consensus analysis provides a well-tested procedure for assessing whether small samples of people share a common knowledge about something that is claimed to be part of their culture.⁷ The results confirmed that there is, among nuns and monks, a shared, cultural understanding of what SI is and how it is lived. The results are significant at the .99 confidence level, a more than adequate demonstration that the results are predictive within the monastic culture(s) studied, that a culture of SI has been identified, can be identified again, and that people's knowledge about how SI is defined and practiced can be tested.

Thirty-six (36) items – ways of thinking and behaving – proved statistically significant as components of spiritual integration. Among these, all of the consultants identified – statistically – as being the most knowledgeable about SI agreed perfectly, 100% of the time, on 34 items. Of the remaining two, the level of their agreement is .995 and .996, a likelihood that more than 995 times out of 1000 that these two items will be selected as important by monastics who are knowledgeable of SI.

Table 4 lists all 36 of the elements of SI with probabilities of .99 or higher. At least one of the elements is particular to monastic culture and would not apply outside the monastery, and that is “Being observant of the monastic schedule” – keeping the monastery prayer and work schedule. “Avoiding over-work and excessive stress” will not always be possible, as people in competitive professions, not to mention parents, well know. But events and conditions in monasteries can be far more stressful than usually portrayed. In fact, the extent to which individual monastics develop a life of SI will vary widely across the criteria in Table 4.

Research Ongoing

The authors have received renewed support from Fetzer and are now developing a statistically valid and reliable test of SI. This test will be much shorter than the 73 original questions; the goal is a final questionnaire of about a dozen questions that can be completed in a matter of minutes. Benedictine Oblates, lay people with families and jobs who are affiliated with monasteries for spiritual direction, have been tapped to help trans-

In a free market of ideas, there is no reason to fear what research on religious phenomena will discover.

late the original research questions (Tables 3 and 4) for understanding among elder lay people with diverse religious and non-religious backgrounds. Oblates themselves come from a wide range of experiences and even religious traditions. One of the key consultants, a Catholic Benedictine nun, for example, is director of an Oblate group that is made up entirely of Protestant women.

In this phase of the research, approximately 200 older women and men, residents of assisted living centers, will take the SI test along with established tests for physical health (Ware, 2000), mental health (Radloff, 1977), and life satisfaction (Bradburn, 1969; Inglehot & Rabier, 1986). Their scores on the SI test will be compared with the results of the health tests to attain a measure of the relationship

between SI and their health status. Based on these results, the SI research may be ready for clinical trials to assess its practical potential for use in healthcare settings.

The authors will report back, in these pages, when the current phase of research is complete.

5. SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

To this point, it has been reasonably established that spiritual integration is real in the lives of nuns and monks, and that it can be measured. In the second phase research is focused on translating for secular use what was learned from the monastic communities. In this phase, the researchers are testing spiritual integration among a cross-section of senior adults and comparing the results with their scores on tests of physical health, mental health, and life satisfaction.

One of the attractive aspects of spiritual integration is that it operates at a level that is universal to virtually all religious and spiritual traditions, so its application is potentially very broad. Indeed, in the current phase researchers will administer the SI test to a cross-section of Christian and Jewish elders from diverse denominations and of varied degrees of religiosity. The potential for the method, however, is much broader than this. Catholic nuns and monks have found few barriers to spiritual discourse with Eastern Orthodox and Buddhist nuns and monks and also with spiritual adepts in Hinduism and Islam. The reason they give for this is that the core spiritual principles across these religious traditions are much the same, despite differences in theology, ritual observance, and the organizational structures that distinguish the world's religions. With this in mind, the authors' plan, in yet a future stage of the research, to translate the SI test for a sample of people who represent a cross-section of the worlds religions and for people outside of organized religion.

Some Policy Considerations

Beyond the question of the potential application of spiritual integration in the broader population of aging people, several points bear consideration in light of the foregoing discussion.

1. Elected officials and their organizations are sometimes skeptical of basic ("pure") research, because it often has no direct line to practical problem solving. This report demonstrates the way that discoveries made through basic research often proceed to applications that have practical value. The concept of SI was recognized and formulated while doing basic research on monastic cultures. The SI concept would have stopped there, except that Fetzer committed to seed a few research projects to assess new possibilities in the measurement of spirituality.

2. This paper provides a look at the trend toward integrating physical, emotional, and spiritual approaches to health and well being. And it discusses the potential of said approaches to help provide better elder care and education at a manageable price. As policy makers ponder real and possible partnerships between government and religious institutions, issues of elder health will be at the forefront of considerations.

3. Policy professionals, including politicians, will find it increasingly useful to be conversant in the kinds of

aging process, people adjust the amount and kind of work they perform, but they remain committed to a daily regimen of ordinary labor (Reidhead & Wolford, 1998). Monastics remain productive until they become incapacitated or die, usually the latter. The 83-year-old infirmarian in one monastery explained that he attributes, in part, the health and longevity of monks to their life-long engagement in work that is useful to the community and has meaning, giving purpose, to the individual.⁸ He linked this ability to see work as meaningful back to the spiritually integrated orientation of the monks. Research into the applied knowledge that some cultures possess about such valuable practices is not, in its resource potential, unlike the work done by botanists to discover the properties of medicinal plants known to peoples in tribal societies. One big difference, however, is that nobody owns the rights to spirituality.

The Place of Research in the Separation of Church and State

It may seem self-serving for researchers to endeavor to convince policy makers to help fund their kind of research. But public officials understand better than most the difficulty, yet the necessity, of asking others to fund their work on a shared vision of a better world and how to achieve it. Researchers are public servants every bit as much as public officials. As citizen servants it is the privilege and responsibility of researchers to work in areas of investigation that they genuinely believe are important for the public good. When researchers possess enough passion for their work to ask for funding, it is because they believe they are onto something of value that transcends their own interests. It falls to policy makers and implementers to endeavor, with the same passion, to assess where the ever-present currents of change are leading and to assure that good research helps prepare us for the adaptive challenges of ever new environments.

One dimension of the new environment, contrary to Freud's proclamation, is that religion has reemerged in the public debate at a level not seen in this country in many years. This raises important considerations of the separation between church and state and the imperative Americans share to sustain a healthy separation. What then is government to do if it turns out that religion is more beneficial than we had become comfortable thinking? Should the responsible public policy adviser urge legislators to fund churches to recruit old people for spirituality classes? This would make the present authors very uncomfortable, for the negative impact it would have on religion and government. Do we really want to replicate the Soviet experiment with state religion?

Perhaps a better solution is for government to weigh-in as a regular partner by funding research about the things that churches do, and leave it to the churches, in the free market of ideas, to make use, or not, of the knowledge explosion this would produce. In a free market of ideas, there is no reason to fear what research on religious phenomena will discover. Churches themselves are not in the business of basic research, but they are avid consumers of the information and knowledge that research provides. This would be a clean partnership, unsullied by government intervention in the church and free of the certainty that the church will find religious justification to protect its financial stake in government, which will inevitably grow as its dependence on government money increases.

LIVABLE communities don't just **HAPPEN**.
They are **CREATED** by the **PEOPLE** who **LIVE** in them.

REFERENCES AND MATERIAL FOR FURTHER READING:

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ENDNOTES:

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²The term Trappist is a moniker that distinguishes these monastics from Cistercians of the Common Observance, in recognition of a split in the original Cistercian Order that was confirmed in the 19th century. The members of the more strict order, Trappists, generally prefer to be called Cistercians. In this paper they are called Trappist Cistercians, an appellation used by sociologist George Hillery (Hillery, 1992) to distinguish them from Cistercians no longer of the same order.

³Solemn vows are taken after approximately 6 years of preparation in the novitiate and in simple vows, allowing ample time for candidates to assess their suitability for monastic life and culture.

⁴The data in Table 1 are abridged from the extended version reported in Reidhead, Table 1 (Reidhead, 1999).

⁵The content of Table 2 looks different than that of Table 1, because the attributes of SI, spelled out in Table 2, are organized differently than the components of SI, identified in Table 1. This is because the project consultants and researchers were able to devote time to collectively hammering out, in theological and practical detail, how the free listed attributes of SI fit together. For reasons of time and money, the group was unable to give the same treatment to the free list definition of SI, and considering that reorganizing Table 1 would not change the substance of the results, the PI judged it best to leave the table alone.

⁶A more complete list of question items is in Reidhead (Reidhead, Reidhead, and Hurwicz, 1999) and can be requested from the first author.

⁷Source material on Consensus Analysis can be found in Romney et al. (1986), Weller and Romney (1988), Bernard (1995), and Hurwicz (1995; 1999).. Reidhead (Reidhead, Reidhead, and Hurwicz 1999) provides a detailed discussion of the Consensus Analysis results from the SI questionnaire.

⁸Statistics accumulated in earlier monastic research by the authors, and John Hannah, and reported in an unpublished paper by Hannah, demonstrate that a community of monks in the Rocky Mountain region enjoys better health, fewer days lost to illness, and longer life than the general population of men in the same region. Interviews with MD's who treat the same monks further confirm the higher standard of physical and mental health enjoyed by these men compared to secular patients. Does this mean that one has to be a monk to enjoy such rewards in life? Or, alternatively, has society in its zeal to get beyond religion closed its mind to knowledge that is accessible for the asking? Only research, in partnership with practice, can answer this question definitively.