

IMAGE OF GOD AND PERSONALITY AS PREDICTORS OF SPIRITUALITY IN MEN AND WOMEN

Joseph W. Ciarrocchi

Ralph L. Piedmont

Joseph E. G. Williams

ABSTRACT

This study investigated whether image of God (IOG) predicted spirituality differentially for men and women. Participants were 725 women and 264 men undergraduates (USA) from mostly Christian denominations. Participants rated God on the five-factor domains on the Adjective Check List and their spiritual experience on the Faith Maturity Scale. They rated their own personality on the five-factor domains either with the NEO-FFI or the Bipolar Adjective Scale. Multivariate analysis revealed that the strength of the relationships between personality and IOG was similar for men and women. Differences between men and women on ratings of God reached statistical significance on four out five factors with effect sizes ranging from .19 (Extraversion) to .49 (Agreeableness). Although women rated God higher on desirable relational qualities, the overall means for both men and women's God-ratings described an individual with positive relational qualities. Controlling for the effect of personality, IOG predicted spirituality for women but not men. Women had a mildly stronger personal spirituality and moderately stronger communal spirituality than men did. Personality was more strongly related to spirituality in women than in men. Gender schema theory is discussed as a potential explanation for these specific effects.

Religious studies have exhibited increased interest in the sources of God images from the vantage point of feminist theology (Daly, 1973; Johnson, 1996; Stucky-Abbott, 1995) and ethics (Spohn, 2000). These writers have suggested further that image of God (IOG) plays a central role in people's general religious outlook, their views of themselves, and even institutional structures. "Since the symbol of God is the focal point of the whole religious system, an entire world order and world view are wrapped up with its character" (Johnson, 1996, p. 36).

The worldviews attendant on God symbols are powerful sources of behavior whether prosocial, in the case of a Mother Theresa of Calcutta, or destructive, in the case of the abortion clinic bomber who desired to, "... make people reflect 'not on what they think,

but what God thinks” (Juergensmeyer, 2000, p. 218). Understanding these symbols of God, their development, and their relationship to key individual differences may shed light on the complex nature of religiously motivated behavior. On the one hand, religious groups represent the largest private sector given to charitable causes and, on the other hand, the United States State Department determined that over half of the thirty most dangerous groups in the world were religious entities (Juergensmeyer, 2000, p. 6).

The current study addressed two issues around IOG raised by psychology of religion and religious studies. The first question addresses the potential sources for IOG. Previous research identified at least three: the self, parental/family origins, and the broader social community, e.g., faith groups. The second question looks at how IOG functions, i.e. how does it relate to important aspects of feeling, thinking, behavior, and motivation? In other words, does IOG matter as theologians and social theorists maintain?

With regard to the first question this study limits itself to examining self-sources of IOG. Representing the oldest explanation for IOG (Feuerbach, 1841/1957), this model proposed that IOG largely derives from people’s projection of themselves onto the Deity. Empirical research has supported self as a source for IOG in multiple ways. Benson and Spilka (1973) found that positive self-esteem related to loving and kindly IOG, but negative self-esteem related to vindictive, controlling, impersonal, and stern IOG. Self-esteem contributed even more to IOG than parental images (Buri & Mueller, 1993). Positive self-views also correlated with nurturing IOG, and a positive generalized self-concept contributed significantly to IOG (Jolley & Taulbee, 1986). Conversely, seeing oneself as depressed or critical of others correlated with disciplining IOG (Roberts, 1989). Attachment and object relations research found self-descriptions across both these variables related to perceptions of God (Brokaw & Edwards, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992; Tisdale et al., 1997). Relationships in a similar direction occurred for images of Jesus in a Christian sample. Self-measures correlated with perceptions of Jesus on the Eysenck Personality Inventory (Francis & Astley, 1997), and on five-factor personality measures (Piedmont, Williams, & Ciarrocchi, 1997).

These IOG studies, however, either did not include gender analysis or had too small a sample for relevant interpretation. When studies have analyzed gender issues in IOG, they have more frequently noted differences. First, men and women have consistent group

differences in their IOG. In general, women tend to view God as more nurturing, loving, personal, and feminine-egalitarian than men do (Babin, 1964; Hammersla, Andrews-Qualls, & Frease, 1986; Hertel & Donahue, 1995; Nelson, Cheek, & Au, 1985; Potvin, 1997; Roberts, 1989). Men, on the other hand, tend to view God as more malevolent, authoritarian, vindictive, and irrelevant than women do (Hammersla et al., 1986; Hertel & Donahue, 1985; Larsen & Knapp, 1964).

Second, when self-influences are taken into consideration, women consistently have stronger relationships between their self-views and IOG than do men. For college aged men, negative self-esteem was related to wrathful IOG, and for women positive self-esteem was related to loving, kindly, and close IOG. But the overall relationship between self-esteem and IOG was stronger for women (Spilka, Addison, & Rosensohn, 1975). For older adolescents self esteem was related to one's IOG for females, but not for males (Potvin, 1977). Images of Jesus had considerably more correlations with self-measures of personality for women than for men (Ciarrocchi, Piedmont, & Williams, 1998). As a result these findings leave some, "...questioning the appropriateness of combining the sexes in work of this type" (Spilka et al., 1975, p. 157).

Several studies have addressed the second question by relating IOG to various psychosocial and religious outcomes. For example, IOG correlated with positive views of human nature (Schonfield, 1987), political ideologies (Welch & Leege, 1988), physical health (McIntosh & Spilka, 1990), mental health (Pargament et al., 1990), religious problem solving (Schaffer & Gorsuch, 1991), and religious outcomes following negative events (Pargament et al., 1990).

Third, previous research suggested that IOG may function differently for men and women. In a sample of college students IOG was related to emotional distress for women but not for men (Ciarrocchi, 2000). In that study IOG had incremental validity in predicting psychological symptoms over and above personality traits only for women. Gender differences in IOG are surprisingly consistent given the radically different instruments, sample sizes, and populations studied. Overall the data fit broadly into a cognitive understanding of gender. In this model gender functions as a schema which then influences information processing (Cross & Markus, 1993). On the basis of these schemas people make judgements, remember information, and even create behavioral outcomes based on these expectations. Men and women, according to this theory, have stereotypic schema attributes.

For men the attributes focus on separation of the self from others and for women the focus is on relationship with others.

Extending this model to IOG, it would predict that women would rate God higher on relational attributes (e.g., nurturing) and men would rate God higher on separateness attributes (e.g., authoritarian). This echoes earlier conceptual discussions around agency and communion as fundamental aspects of human nature (Bakan, 1966). Serious methodological problems, however, exist in much IOG research. Research on self-sources for IOG suffers from restricted measures of self, often including as few descriptors as ten adjectives. As such these findings cannot encompass the broad range of variables currently accepted in the field of personality psychology. Neither can they adequately encompass the range of self-characteristics that might have relevance as sources for IOG. Second, results using brief adjective checklists of personality cannot easily generalize to well-established psychological constructs. Lacking psychometric robustness, these narrow instruments cannot bridge their findings to larger conceptual issues in the psychology of religion.

The current study examined various aspects of IOG. First we attempted to understand IOG through its association with personality and spiritual experience. In keeping with the above-noted criticisms we used a broad-based measure of spirituality, the Faith Maturity scale (FMS), which measures both personal and relational spirituality/religiousness. Studies have found that the FMS predicts over and above personality to various psychosocial outcomes such as distress, prosocial behavior, and ways of coping (Ciarrocchi, 2000; Ciarrocchi, Piedmont & Williams, 2000; Piedmont, 1999; Piedmont & Nelson, 2001). Second, we used an incremental validity paradigm to determine whether IOG accounted for spiritual beliefs above and beyond personality. To attain greater confidence about measuring a broad range of personality we used instruments that encompassed the five-factor model of personality thereby enhancing interpretation of results. Many researchers have noted that for the psychology of religion to advance, its constructs have to represent more than the mere 'religification' of nonreligious psychosocial variables (Gorsuch, 1988; Sloan, Bagiella, & Powell, 2001, Van Wicklin, 1990). Finally, we examined the data for possible gender differences.

Specifically we predicted: 1) Consistent with previous research women and men would differ in their descriptions of IOG. Women would rate God higher on attributes viewed as desirable in rela-

tionships than men would rate God; 2) Consistent with self theories (Feuerbach) on origin of IOG, we predicted synchronicity between self-ratings and IOG on the five factors of personality and that the contribution of self-ratings for IOG would be stronger for women than men; 3) IOG would predict faith maturity over and above personality for men and women. IOG, further, would predict social-relational spirituality for women and God-relational spirituality for men consistent with gender schema theories suggesting relational schemas for women and separateness schemas for men.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 725 women and 264 men undergraduates enrolled in introductory psychology courses in a Mid-western state university (USA). Participants received course credit for volunteering for the study. This sample was created by aggregating data from several different studies that were done by the authors on issues related to image of God over a three year period. The students' mean age was 18.5 years with a standard deviation of 2.1 years. Religious affiliation of the group was 46% Roman Catholic, 34% Protestant, 10.5% Orthodox, 0.4% Jewish, 5.5% refused to respond, and 3.9% other.

Measures

Adjective Checklist (ACL)

The ACL (Gough & Heilbrun, 1983) consists of 300 adjectives, which the person selects as the most descriptive of himself or herself. The scale provides information on 33 scales from diverse theoretical orientations, including Murray's Needs (1938), Berne's (1961) Transactional Analysis, Welsh's (1975) Intellectance and Originence Scales and several scales developed by Gough and Heilbrun (1983) to measure salient interpersonal qualities. John (1990) created adjective marker scales for each of the five-factor model dimensions, which demonstrated convergence with other measures of the five-factor model and the ACL (Piedmont, McCrae, & Costa, 1991). Piedmont (1989) obtained normative values for these scales. In the current study participants selected adjectives that best described the God of their belief.

NEO-FFI

Developed by Costa and McCrae (1992), this is a shorter 60-item version of the NEO Personality Inventory-Revised which operationalizes the major dimensions of personality hypothesized in the five-factor model: neuroticism (N), representing emotional vulnerability; extraversion (E), an indicator of positive energy and gregariousness; openness (O), a tendency to seek new knowledge and experience for its own sake; agreeableness (A), contrasts a compassionate, prosocial orientation toward others with a more selfish, antagonistic view; and conscientiousness (C), representing motivation for goal-directed tasks.

Items are answered on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*, and scales are balanced to control for acquiescence. Internal consistencies for the five domains ranged from .86 to .95. Long-term stability has been well documented. The NEO-PIR has been extensively validated (McCrae & Costa, 1987; Piedmont, McCrae, & Costa, 1991), and has shown predictive utility with a large number of life outcomes such as somatic complaints, coping with stress, well-being and response to psychotherapy (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Bipolar Adjective Scale

McCrae and Costa (1985, 1987) also developed this 80-item scale to capture the five major dimensions of personality described above. Responses are measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale and scores for each dimension are obtained by summing responses for each dimension of the five factors. Originally validated on adults, this scale also is reliable and valid for use with college students (Piedmont, 1995).

Faith Maturity Scale

This twelve-item abbreviated questionnaire from Benson, Donahue, and Erickson's (1993) longer version measured the degree to which people describe their commitment to a faith orientation. The instrument consists of two subscales. The horizontal subscale measures the degree to which a faith commitment orients people's lives toward helping others, and the vertical subscale describes a person's perceived intimacy with God. This version of the Faith Maturity Scale predicted emotional distress and prosocial behavior after controlling for personality (Ciarrocchi, 2000; Ciarrocchi et al., 2000). In a sample

of 1,700 college students alpha reliabilities for the vertical, horizontal, and total score were .92, .75, and .91 respectively. In addition the scale demonstrated incremental validity over personality in predicting purpose in life, self-actualization, and various religious variables (Piedmont & Nelson, 2001).

Procedure

All participants rated themselves on either the Bipolar Adjective Scale (year 1) or the NEO-FFI (years 2 and 3). Separately they rated God on the Adjective Checklist. Participants filled out all the instruments in small group settings and received course credit for their participation.

Results

Data from all three years were aggregated and Table 1 provides the *T*-scores for self-ratings and ratings of God on the five factors of personality. *T*-scores of 55 or greater and 45 or less are considered identifying distinct characteristics. For the self-ratings no scores fell in the distinctive range indicating that the sample resembles the general college age population on these dimensions. Women scored significantly higher on neuroticism and agreeableness than men did but these differences were in the small range (Cohen's $d = .15$ and $.19$ respectively; Cohen & Cohen 1983).

Both men and women viewed God as emotionally stable and interpersonally sensitive. Nevertheless, the first hypothesis is supported in that women's ratings of God are higher on attributes considered relationally desirable, that is, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness and lower on relationally undesirable qualities (neuroticism-emotional instability). The difference in men's and women's ratings of God ranged from small to medium. Small differences existed for neuroticism, extraversion and conscientiousness, and a moderate difference for agreeableness.

The second hypothesis predicted a relationship between personality and IOG and that the relationship would be stronger for women than they are for men. Table 2 reveals the correlations between self-ratings and ratings of God on five factor domains for men and women. Significant correlations between men's self-ratings and ratings of God occurred for extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, and between women's personality and ratings of God on extraversion,

openness, and agreeableness. Overall men's personality ratings correlated significantly with their ratings of God on 5 out of 25 possible combinations, and women's correlated on eight combinations.

To analyze the next part of the hypothesis, we calculated the relative strength of the relationship between personality and ratings of God through a multivariate R^2 (1 minus Wilk's lambda; Cohen & Cohen, 1983) for each gender's self-ratings and ratings of God on the five factor domains. For men the multivariate $R^2 = .22$ and the multivariate $R = .47$; for women the multivariate R^2 was .19 and the multivariate R was .44. The strength of the relationship between self-ratings and ratings of God for men and women were highly similar. Thus, correlational and multivariate analysis did not support a gender effect for the strength of the relationship between IOG and self-personality, even though a number of significant relationships existed between self-ratings and IOG for both men and women.

The third hypothesis predicted that IOG would contribute to faith maturity independently of personality but the patterns would differ

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics and t-tests for Gender Differences on Personality and Religious Variables*

Measures	Males		Females		<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Self Rating on Five Factors						
Neuroticism	50.15	8.27	51.83	9.18	2.73**	.19
Extraversion	50.64	9.03	51.10	9.94	.69	
Openness	49.50	8.94	48.50	9.84	-1.50	
Agreeableness	46.61	8.37	47.30	9.71	2.13**	.15
Conscientiousness	46.61	8.37	47.30	9.71	1.09	
God Ratings on Adjective Check List						
Neuroticism	43.10	7.24	41.01	6.44	-4.12***	.29
Extraversion	49.71	7.23	51.19	7.84	2.76**	.19
Openness	49.47	8.00	49.78	5.86	.52	
Agreeableness	54.69	9.71	59.25	6.81	7.02***	.49
Conscientiousness	52.23	9.89	54.83	7.74	3.87***	.27
Faith Maturity Scores						
Vertical	20.10	6.99	21.76	6.85	3.30***	.23
Horizontal	12.78	5.17	14.46	5.05	4.55***	.32
Total	42.97	15.63	46.99	14.79	3.62***	.25

n for men is 264

n for women is 725

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

for men and women. Table 1 provides men and women's scores on the faith maturity scale and indicates that women are significantly higher on all dimensions of faith maturity. Table 1 reports the mean scores on faith maturity for men and women. Women were higher on all three scales with differences ranging from small to moderate verifying the general finding that women score higher on measures of spirituality/religiousness (Hood, Spilka, Huntsberger, and Gorsuch, 1996). Table 3 reports the correlations for men and women between IOG and faith maturity. Women's faith maturity correlated significantly for all ten relationships with IOG, but only three of ten correlations with IOG were significant for men. All correlations were in the small range and suggest that there was some overlap between IOG and faith maturity but these religious variables were not redundant.

The zero-order correlations between personality and faith maturity illustrated a markedly different gender pattern. Table 4 indicates that only agreeableness had a significant relationship with faith maturity for men, but all five factors of personality correlated significantly for women. At the same time it is notable that the strength of the relationships was in the low range indicating that faith maturity and personality also have minimal overlap.

Table 2. *Correlations between Self-ratings and God-ratings on Five-Factor Model Marker Scales*

Self-ratings	Ratings of God				
	Neuro.	Extra.	Open.	Agree.	Consc.
Men					
Neuro.	-.00	-.02	-.07	-.01	.02
Extra.	-.06	.29***	.07	.13*	.10
Open.	-.07	-.09	.07	.01	.03
Agree.	-.04	.11	.11	.16**	.11
Consc.	-.04	.08	-.03	.12*	.16**
Women					
Neuro.	.06	-.04	-.03	-.02	-.04
Extra.	-.14**	.23***	.04	.15***	.06
Open.	-.07	-.00	.14***	-.01	.02
Agree.	-.14***	.10**	.01	.28***	.14***
Consc.	-.01	.03	-.00	.02	.07

Note: Neuro. = Neuroticism; Extra. = Extraversion; Open. = Openness; Agree = Agreeableness; Consc. = Conscientiousness

n for men = 264, for women = 725

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 3. *Correlations Between Faith Maturity Scales and Five-Factor Images of God as Function of Gender*

Images of God	Faith Maturity Scales	
	Horizontal	Vertical
Men		
Neuroticism	.08	-.11
Extraversion	.06	.14*
Openness	.03	.15*
Agreeableness	.04	.21***
Conscientiousness	-.03	.09
Women		
Neuroticism	-.17***	-.16***
Extraversion	.08*	.17***
Openness	.08*	.11**
Agreeableness	.18***	.24***
Conscientiousness	.18***	.13***

Note. N = 263 for men; 724 for women

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 4. *Correlations Between Self-Personality Ratings and Faith Maturity*

Self Ratings	Faith Maturity		
	Horizontal	Vertical	Total
Men			
Neuroticism	-.02	-.02	-.01
Extraversion	.07	.10	.08
Openness	.07	.07	.05
Agreeableness	.24***	.21***	.25***
Conscientiousness	.08	.06	.06
Women			
Neuroticism	-.13***	-.08*	-.10**
Extraversion	.10**	.11**	.11**
Openness	.21***	.09*	.13***
Agreeableness	.23***	.11**	.17***
Conscientiousness	.08*	.11**	.10**

Note. N for men = 262; for women = 724

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

To test hypothesis three more directly by ruling out the potentially confounding role of cohort, a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted using total faith maturity as the criterion variable. To control for cohort effects from the different years of data collection each year was entered as a covariate. For each analysis the cohort effect was nonsignificant. The five domain scores of the self-ratings were then entered as the next step on the regression equation for each gender separately. Then the five domains for the ratings of God were entered using a forward entry method. A partial *F*-test was calculated to determine if the increase in explained variance over personality was significant.

As expected Table 5 indicates that personality explained a significant amount of variance for total faith maturity for both men and women. Personality explained 7% of the variance in faith maturity for men and 5% of the variance for women. When looking at the independent contribution of IOG with FM, IOG added significant explanatory power over personality for women but not for men (6%; $p < .001$).

The next part of the hypothesis, however, was not supported by an individual analysis of each FM scale. IOG did not predict only a communal faith expression for women or an individual God experience for men. Rather, IOG added significant incremental validity to personality for women on both the vertical (6%) and on the horizontal scale (3%) but on neither scale for men. Inspection of the beta weights for personality and IOG reveals the dimensions that predict FM for men and women (Table 6). Only personal agreeableness predicts faith maturity for men, whereas only neuroticism fails to be a significant predictor for women. As stated above, no IOG factor predicts faith maturity above personality for men but, again, for women all variables on IOG except neuroticism add predictive validity to faith maturity.

DISCUSSION

Research on gender in the psychology of religion has numerous challenges. First, parallel to other domains of psychology, the question arises as to whether meaningful gender differences exist. Gender differences have been found across multiple psychological domains (Baumeister, 2000; Beall & Sternberg, 1993) but the more important question is whether these differences are trivial or meaningful.

Baumeister (1988) has argued convincingly that research should not mindlessly catalogue gender differences.

From this study we can respond affirmatively that gender differences exist in self-reports of spiritual variables. On measures of faith maturity and IOG, statistically significant gender differences occurred. To answer the second question, it is necessary to examine both the magnitude and pattern of these differences. Men and women differed minimally on the Faith Maturity Vertical Scale. Apparently both sexes in this sample viewed their personal relationship with God as nearly equally important. The difference was larger on the horizontal dimension with women reporting a greater interest in the prosocial and relational dimensions of faith.

Table 5. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Faith Maturity with Personality and Image of God

Criterion Variable	R ²	ΔR ²	Partial F
Faith Maturity Total			
Men ^a			
Personality	.07		3.99***
Image of God	.11	.03	1.78
Women ^b			
Personality	.05		7.90***
Image of God	.11	.06	10.00***
Faith Maturity Vertical			
Men			
Personality	.06		2.99**
Image of God	.10	.04	2.21
Women			
Personality	.04		5.28***
Image of God	.10	.06	10.14***
Faith Maturity Horizontal			
Men			
Personality	.07		3.68
Image of God	.09	.02	.99
Women			
Personality	.09		14.73***
Image of God	.12	.03	5.02***

Note. Personality is first step in each analysis

^aN = 251

^bN = 723

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

These young men and women, therefore, were similar in their desire for a personal relationship with God, but women were more interested in religion's social outreach or communal dimension. This finding not only replicates psychology of religion research on gender differences (Hood et al., 1996) but also replicates various social cognitive gender theories that point to women as more likely to have an orientation toward communal relationships than men (Cross & Markus, 1993; Helgeson, 1994).

Further evidence for gender differences resulted in examining IOG. Not only did men and women differ on four of five dimensions they rated God, with four differences in the small range and one in the medium range (agreeableness), the pattern of the differences is also interesting. Women rated God as having more features of what

Table 6. *Beta Weights for Personality Factors Predicting Faith Maturity*

Personality Variable	Total		Vertical		Horizontal	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Neuroticism	.07	-.02	.06	-.01	.05	-.03
Extraversion	.08	.08*	.10	.09**	.06	.04
Openness	.02	.09**	.04	.06	.04	.18***
Agreeableness	.25***	.13***	.21***	.08*	.24***	.18***
Conscientiousness	.05	.08*	.04	.10**	.07	.06

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 7. *Beta Weights for Image of God Factors Predicting Faith Maturity Controlling for Personality*

Image of God Variable	Total		Vertical		Horizontal	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Neuroticism	-.02	-.02	-.07	-.03	.07	-.03
Extraversion	.08	.07	.07	.10**	.07	-.03
Openness	.04	.07	.07	.09**	.08	.05
Agreeableness	.18	.20***	.18	.20***	.02	.08*
Conscientiousness	-.17	.02	-.17	-.05	-.13	.10*

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

David Buss (1996) has termed desirable for forming strategic alliances in relationships, and fewer features that are viewed as interfering with strategic relationships. That is, women see God as more extraverted, conscientious, agreeable, and less emotionally unstable than men do. Yet, overall, both men and women describe God as having the desirable relationship attributes of emotional stability and agreeableness.

Reviewing how these religious variables might function for men and women could help determine whether gender differences in religion are meaningful. In a previous study IOG and faith maturity predicted emotional distress over and above personality for women but not men (Ciarrocchi, 2000) but in a separate study (Ciarrocchi, Piedmont, & Williams, 2000) IOG predicted prosocial behavior for men but not women. In the present research IOG predicted faith maturity above personality for women, but not men. This suggests that IOG functions as theologians have maintained (Johnson, 1996) but that its functioning is subject to individual difference. Gender, for example, may be one lens that filters people's religious experience. As Gorsuch (1967) suggested, individual differences may exist in religious persons in terms of which aspects of the deity they deem desirable. In line with this viewpoint, Piedmont (1999) found that among a set of variables overall Spiritual Transcendence was the best predictor of IOG for women but family environment and father's conscientiousness were best predictors of IOG for men.

Various psychological models would predict gender differences for IOG. Object relations theorists (Tisdale et al., 1997) maintain that "God is experienced as an object like any other" (p. 228). Social cognitive theory views gender as a salient category for viewing self and others (Cross & Markus, 1993). Such approaches can readily incorporate contemporary perspectives in the philosophy of religion that view religion "... as a self-regulating response of the human animal to the pressures generated by its particular niche within the biological system" (Hick, 1989, p. 1). If religion is a self-regulating response to one's biological niche it is reasonable to suppose that gender functions as one feature in people's attempts to use religion adaptively. Previous explanations of gender difference in religious involvement or perspective emphasized socialization differences (Hood et al., 1996). Although the body of research on IOG cannot rule out socialization, the patterns in gender differences make a case for looking closely at gender schemas for their contribution to religious expe-

rience and behavior. Such schemas may be the result of socialization, but research has found that both personality and gender role disposition are remarkably consistent cross-culturally (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001; Best & Williams, 1993). If spirituality represents a "sixth factor" of personality (Piedmont, 1999), explanations that are independent of culture are likely operating and worth exploring.

Methodological refinements in IOG research may demonstrate greater gender differences than the current study. One limitation of the IOG measure used in this study is that it is derived from a personality test of humans that does not tap perceived features of the Deity e.g., omnipotence (for a different approach see Lawrence, 1997). It is possible, however, that IOG as a single religious construct lacks the breadth of more relational and less static religious variables. In the current study, for example, only one personality feature in men (agreeableness) was related to faith maturity, whereas all five dimensions were related to it for women. Women, in a sense, may put more of themselves into their overall spirituality, but not necessarily into their image of God. In summarizing the empirical literature on gender differences Baumeister has speculated "... simply put, men may have a separate idea of themselves without wanting to be socially separate beings. That is, men may be more prone than are women to conceptualize both without thinking simultaneously of other people's relationships but they, nonetheless, have a strong need to belong" (Baumeister & Sommer, 1997, p. 44). This insight may help the psychology of religion to explain the closer link in women between themselves and their spirituality.

Although the study points to gender differences, its methodology cannot readily explain those differences. Longitudinal studies are required to determine further the convergent and discriminant validity of religious/spiritual constructs. The current study is further limited in that the sample represented only college undergraduates. These participants' IOG may represent a certain developmental phase and thus may not generalize to older adults' IOG. The findings may also not generalize to non-Christian samples. Future research will need to examine more diverse populations both with regard to age, religious beliefs, strength of religious beliefs, and culture. The correlational nature of this study limits conclusions about the directionality of the relationships as well. Although it is unlikely that IOG influences personality, third factors could influence both personality and IOG (e.g., parental influences).

This study does not permit conceptual resolution of all its findings but can further our understanding of IOG in light of previous research. Empirical research thus far has identified at least three potential sources for IOG: (a) *primary interpersonal sources* related to parents and/or primary caretakers; (b) *secondary interpersonal sources-socialization* related to religious educators, faith communities, etc.; and (c) *self-sources*-one's own personality features. The most comprehensive study to date (Spilka, Addison, & Rosensohn, 1975), found support for all three sources on people's IOG. No single source strongly outperformed any other in predicting IOG. However that study was limited by measuring a restricted range of personality features. The present study did not find, as hypothesized, that women or men use more self-sources of personality in their IOG. Despite statistically significant differences in their descriptions of God-qualities, men and women nevertheless end up with fairly similar portraits.

Finally, the study highlights several methodological issues. First it demonstrates that some religious measures are not totally redundant with each other. The field needs more research to determine which measures relate to specific spiritual/religious and psychosocial outcomes. Factor analysis of multidimensional religious measures rarely find orthogonal domains (Piedmont & Nelson, 2001; Underwood & Teresi, in press). Second, the study highlights the utility of an incremental validity model in religious research. When personality is taken into account the effect sizes of religious variables often shrink to nonsignificance (Ciarrocchi, Piedmont & Williams, 2000). When researchers fail to account for other common sources of variance they are open to Van Wicklin's (1990) criticism that some religious research may represent only the "religification" of psychological variables. This results in serious criticism of the entire religious research project as it relates to important outcomes (e.g. health research; Sloan, Bagiella, & Powell, 2001).

At the same time researchers need not apologize for modest effects that prevail when using a rigorous incremental validity model. Modest effects are conceptually meaningful when predicted by a precise model that takes into account the contributions of other established variables. In this way we can have greater confidence that religious/spiritual variables contribute uniquely in predicting important outcomes, and therefore are worthy of scientific understanding in their own right.

In summary, the self was an equivalent source for IOG in young men and women but a stronger source for spirituality in women.

Women had a slightly stronger personal and a moderately stronger communal spirituality than men did. When controlling for personality, IOG did not predict men's spirituality, but IOG was a significant predictor of women's spirituality. Both men and women viewed God as having desirable relational qualities. Personality, thus, had a complex relationship with IOG and spirituality in men and women, and IOG had a differential relationship with spirituality in men and women. Cognitive gender schema theory may represent an important conceptual basis for future research directed toward understanding spiritual experiences in men and women.

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