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The religiosity and spirituality scale for youth: development and initial validation

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THE RELIGIOSITY AND SPIRITUALITY SCALE FOR YOUTH: DEVELOPMENT AND
INITIAL VALIDATION

A Dissertation

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Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
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Abstract

The literature cites multiple definitions for religiosity and spirituality, with little consensus among researchers. Religiosity/spirituality has been associated with a myriad of positive outcomes in both adults and youth. Despite the importance of these constructs, there are little to no psychometrically sound measures created to assess religiosity or spirituality in youth. Adult measures are psychometrically strong for use with older populations, but none were developed for use with young people. The purpose of the current study was to develop a psychometrically sound measure of religiosity and spirituality for use with diverse samples of youth. A sample of 307 youth, aged 9-17 were recruited from churches and schools. The majority of the sample consisted of Caucasian youth from a Catholic/Christian background. Factor analyses resulted in a 37-item measure with two factors, *Faith-based Coping* and *Religious Social Support/Activities*. The measure demonstrated strong internal consistency and test-retest reliability data, as well as good preliminary validity.

Literature Review

Recent Gallup polls using data collected between 2002 and 2006 found that approximately 84% of Americans believe that religion is important in their lives (Newport, 2006). Polls using data collected in 2008 found that 77% of Americans identify themselves as Catholic or Christian (Newport, 2009). While these numbers only reflect the opinions of individuals over 18 years of age, it logically follows that many youth likely find religion and spirituality important in their lives as well.

Researchers have not reached a consensus regarding definitions of religiosity and spirituality, and many offer definitions that are confusing and ambiguous (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003; Zinnbauer et al., 1997). Many define religiosity as both beliefs and practices relating to an organized religious affiliation or a specified divine power (e.g., Pargament, 1997; Shafranske & Malony, 1990). Spirituality is a more ambiguous concept, often defined as attitudes and practices aimed at discovering meaning, purpose, or connection with things outside of and larger than the self (e.g., Elkins, Hestrom, Hughes, Leaf, & Saunders, 1988; Kiesling, Sorell, Montgomery, & Colwell, 2008; Piedmont, 1999, 2001; Sinnott, 2002; Smith, 2004; Wink & Dillon, 2002). This conceptualization of spirituality is sometimes termed "spiritual transcendence" (Piedmont, 1999, 2001) and may or may not include references to a sacred or divine power. Others see spirituality as being similar to religiosity in its direct connection to God or a higher power, but representing a more personal view of and connection/commitment to God (Good & Willoughby, 2006; Kahle & Robbins, 2004). The terms are becoming increasingly polarized, with religiosity connoting a more objective, institutionalized concept and spirituality connoting a more subjective, internalized concept (Zinnbauer et al.). Some authors argue that the concepts are connected, with spirituality falling under the umbrella of religiosity (Zinnbauer et

al.) where religiosity may provide rules and structures for spiritual beliefs (Brady, Guy, Poelstra, & Brokaw, 1999).

In a review of the literature, Hill and colleagues (2000) found that the majority of individuals classify themselves as spiritual and religious, suggesting that the two terms overlap significantly (Davis, Kerr, & Kurpius, 2003). For the purposes of this study, religiosity is defined as one's beliefs and practices related to a religious affiliation or to God. The definition of spirituality in this study is modeled after the definitions provided by Kahle and Robbins (2004) and Good and Willoughby (2006). Spirituality is defined as a unique and personal application of one's religious beliefs and practices. It is the subjective way that one experiences and lives out religion.

For many people religiosity and spirituality are heavily intertwined, and it has been suggested that spirituality may actually characterize a sixth personality dimension (Piedmont, 1999). Research with adults has found that higher levels of spirituality or religiosity have been related to life satisfaction, psychological well-being, positive mood, feelings of purpose, gratitude, lower cortisol stress responses, lower blood pressure, and lower mortality rates (Fehring, Brennan, & Keller, 1987; Leak, DeNever, & Greteman, 2007; McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002; Tartaro, Luecken, & Gunn, 2005). Care must be taken in interpreting these results, however, as spirituality and religiosity were measured and defined in differing ways across studies. Nevertheless, there appears to be evidence that spirituality and/or religiosity relate to increased well-being and health in adults.

There is a paucity of research on religiosity and spirituality in youth. Benson, Scales, Sesma, and Roehlkipartain (2006) reviewed and re-analyzed information contained in two national datasets and reported that in 2000, approximately 84% of the high school seniors

surveyed indicated having a particular religious affiliation. Further, for most of the adolescents, religious/spiritual importance remained fairly stable as youth progressed through middle and high school; however, participation in religious activities declined. Smith, Denton, Faris, and Regnerus (2002) also analyzed national datasets and reported that 54% of the adolescents surveyed attended church services at least once or twice a month. Results from the National Study of Youth and Religion (2004) indicate that 95% of adolescents believe in God, 80% rate religion as important, and 80% pray. Benson and colleagues refer to spirituality as an important factor in youths' development. Religiosity and spirituality may also serve to give important meaning to the lives of adolescents (Werner, 1984).

In a review of the literature, Dew and colleagues (2008) found that the measurement of religiosity varied across studies, with most studies defining religiosity as church attendance, religious beliefs, religious affiliation, or religious importance; however, Dew and colleagues indicated that irrespective of the definition employed, 92% of the articles reviewed indicated that religiosity was associated with adolescents' psychological well being (e.g., decreased substance use, depression, suicidal ideation, anxiety, and delinquency). In a separate review, Wong, Rew, and Slaikeu (2006) found religiosity/spirituality (e.g., importance of religion, religious coping, prayer/church attendance, spiritual transcendence) to be related to psychological health (e.g., less depression/anxiety, more positive affect, better relationships, self-esteem) in 90% of articles they reviewed.

In youth, religiosity and spirituality are often related to decreased risk behaviors, such as violence, sexual behaviors, substance use, delinquency, and suicide (Benson et al., 2006; Dew et al., 2008; Good & Willoughby, 2006). Religious involvement and spirituality are also positively related to health, leadership, school success, helping behavior, hope, love, purpose, self-esteem,

and life satisfaction (Benson et al., 2006; Kelley & Miller, 2007; Markstrom, 1999). Kelley and Miller found that religiosity and spirituality (operationalized as daily spiritual experiences, forgiveness, religious coping, and interactions with religious congregations) more strongly predicted life satisfaction in adolescents than in adults. Christian and Barbarin (2001) found that familial religious involvement also positively impacted a sample of African American youth. Specifically, parents' church attendance was related to fewer problems with their children's behavior and mood.

A few studies have compared the relative importance of religiosity and spirituality for youth. Dowling and colleagues (2004) found that religiosity mediated the relationship between spirituality and thriving (i.e., healthy, positive development), but that spirituality also influenced thriving directly. Thriving was operationalized as including academic success, helping behavior, leadership, health, resilience, gratification delay, and valuing others (Dowling, Gestsdottir, Anderson, von Eye, & Lerner, 2003). These results suggest that both religiosity and spirituality are uniquely important for youth. Contrary to this finding, however, Good and Willoughby (2006) found that youth reporting higher levels of religiosity (measured as church attendance) were better adjusted than those with lower levels of attendance, regardless of reported levels of spirituality. These results indicated that church attendance or participation in a church community more strongly impacted adjustment than the adolescents' personal faith in God. Similarly, O'Connor, Hoge, and Alexander (2002) found that attendance in a youth group was the only factor that longitudinally predicted religious involvement in adulthood. However, Barnes, Plotnikoff, Fox, and Pendleton (2000) note that caution should be used when considering youth's religious practices alone since oftentimes parents are in control of youths' church attendance. Finally, it has been suggested that religiosity and spirituality are both separately

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important for adolescents but together may have a greater, compounding effect (Benson et al., 2006; Kelley & Miller, 2007).

Sveidqvist, Joubert, Greene, & Manion (2003) presented several important findings from the Healthy Spirit Project, which used focus groups to obtain data on adolescents' views of religiosity and spirituality. First, youth believed that religion was important to them. Second, youth believed that religion and spirituality were distinct but potentially intertwined concepts. Third, most adolescents disliked the idea of organized religions that imposed strict rules or restrictions upon believers. Finally, many adolescents described spirituality as being a part of their identities and believed it to be beneficial (in moderation) in terms of providing security, comfort, peace, inspiration, strength, well-being, and meaning. They also stated that spirituality was mostly personal and private.

Religion and spirituality may be important coping mechanisms. Coping is defined as the thoughts and actions performed in response to stressful situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Religiosity and spirituality offer potentially effective ways of coping for children and adults, an idea that is recognized by adolescents (Sveidqvist et al., 2003). In adult (predominantly Caucasian) samples drawn across the nation following the September 11th attacks, 90% of respondents reported coping through prayer and reliance on religion (second only to social support; Schuster et al., 2001). For African American families, spirituality has been identified as a vital mechanism for survival and strength (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). Religion may help individuals cope by supplying believers with greater meaning/purpose, control, hope, and self-esteem when dealing with stressful situations (Pargament, 1997; Spilka, Shaver, & Kirkpatrick, 1985). Pargament (1990, 1997) described trust and strength in God, prayer, connection to religious community or "family," and general religiosity to be significant coping

mechanisms. Spirituality has also been found to be an important coping mechanism for young adults, especially when it is manifested as service towards others (Powers, Cramer, & Grubka, 2007). Finally, in a study of grieving children, youth often referred to a relationship with or comfort from God in dealing with the death of a loved one (Andrews & Marotta, 2005).

Religious/spiritual coping has been related to resilience and posttraumatic growth (PTG), or the concept of personal growth following trauma (see Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). In a review of literature predominantly with diverse samples of adults, Shaw, Joseph, and Linley (2005) concluded that religious/spiritual coping and participation in religious activities was positively related to PTG and likewise that trauma can foster spiritual growth and deepening of faith. Religious practices have also been associated with PTG in a predominantly Hispanic sample of adolescents (Milam, Ritt-Olson, & Unger, 2004). The ability to find meaning through faith may be essential for children to be resilient (Werner, 1984). However, it is important to note that trauma experiences can also weaken religious and spiritual beliefs (Shaw et al., 2005).

Much research has pointed out the importance of spirituality, prayer, and social support as coping resources in African American children and families (e.g., Barbarin, 1993; Bryant-Davis, 2005; Daly, Jennings, Beckett, & Leashore, 1995; Jagers & Mock, 1993). Research has indicated that as many as 80% of African Americans believe that religion is important to them, 78% pray almost daily, and approximately 44% turn often to their religion for comfort (Chatters, 2000; Chatters & Taylor, 1989). Jones (2007) found that reliance on spiritual community and beliefs buffered against the effects of severe community violence and increased resilience in African American children. Similarly, spirituality protected African American college students from the effects of exposure to chronic racism (Bowen-Reid & Harrell, 2002). In a study of African American adults who survived Hurricane Katrina, Lawson and Thomas (2007) reported

that the majority of participants coped with the storm through faith in a "Higher Power." This faith did not necessarily manifest itself as church attendance, but more likely included regular prayer, scripture reading, and service towards others.

A distinction has been made between negative and positive forms of religious/spiritual coping (Gall, 2006). Negative religious/spiritual coping involves displeasure with, detachment from, or blame/doubt towards God, whereas positive coping involves seeking support and strength in God (Pargament, Keonig, & Perez, 2000; Pargament, Smith, Koenig, & Perez, 1998) in response to stressful events. Negative and positive coping have been differentially related to outcomes, with negative coping associated with increased distress, depressed mood, and psychological maladjustment (Gall, 2006; Pargament et al., 2000). Positive religious/spiritual coping is related to decreased distress and anger, as well as greater psychological well being. Negative and positive coping predicted distress and depressive symptoms even after controlling for age, stress severity, and secular coping responses (Gall, 2006).

Religiosity and spirituality have been measured in a variety of ways across studies (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003). At the simplest level, religiosity or spirituality have been assessed simply by asking respondents to rate how religious or spiritual they believe themselves to be, how often they attend church, or how important religion or spirituality is to them (e.g., Christian & Barbarin, 2002; Good & Willoughby, 2006). A number of measures also exist for assessing religiosity and spirituality in adults, but there are few to no measures for youth samples (Barnes et al., 2000; Jones, 2007).

Among the most commonly used scales for adults are the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWB; Ellison & Paloutzian, 1983), the Brief RCOPE (Pargament et al., 1998), and the Spiritual Transcendence Scale (STS; Piedmont, 1999). The SWB is a 20-item measure that assesses

spirituality on two dimensions: Religious Well-Being and Existential Well-Being. These two dimensions are meant to assess one's relationship and beliefs related to God as well as beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life. The measure was developed on a sample of college students. The SWB demonstrates adequate internal consistency (alphas of .73-.89) and good test-retest reliability and validity. The SWB has a Flesch-Kincaid reading grade level of 4.9.

The Brief RCOPE is a 14-item measure that assesses religious coping on two dimensions: Positive Religious Coping and Negative Religious Coping. Items for the Brief RCOPE were taken from the RCOPE, a 100-item measure. Items were theoretically derived and the measure was developed on a sample of college students. The Brief RCOPE demonstrates good reliability (alphas of .81 and .90) and validity as well as a stable factor structure. The measure has a Flesch-Kincaid reading grade level of 3.7.

The STS is a 24-item measure that assesses spirituality on three dimensions: Universality, Connectedness, and Prayer Fulfillment. Items on the STS were developed with the help of theological experts and piloted on a sample of college students. The measure demonstrates adequate reliability (alphas of .65-.85), good validity, and a stable factor structure. It has a Flesch-Kincaid reading grade level of 7.0. The STS has been used in diverse populations with success (e.g., Piedmont & Leach, 2002).

Although these measures are adequate and psychometrically strong for use with adults, they were not developed for use with children and adolescents. The Spirituality Questionnaire (Jones, 2007) was recently developed to measure both religiosity and spirituality in African American adolescents. The measure contains 25-items and demonstrated strong reliability data. However, this measure was developed within an Africentric framework, focusing on ideas and practices important specifically in the African American culture. Therefore, the measure may not

be appropriate for use with youth from other cultures. Due to differences in how youth and adults value and utilize religion and spirituality, it is imperative that these constructs in youth are assessed using measures that were developed for and on samples of young people. In addition, developmental differences in cognition and behavior also support the need for a youth-focused measure.

Researchers are calling for the development and use of multidimensional measures of religiosity/spirituality with adolescents (Dew et al., 2008; Zinnbauer et al., 1997). The purpose of the current study is to develop a psychometrically sound, multidimensional measure of religiosity and spirituality for use with diverse samples of youth. The study includes the following aims:

(1) To explore and identify underlying factors/dimensions following the generation of items representing various beliefs, practices, and coping methods related to religiosity and spirituality.

(2) To establish reliability data (i.e., internal consistency and test retest reliabilities) for the measure and to identify a readability estimate.

(3) To provide preliminary validity date for the measure. Based on cited research, it is predicted that factors on the measure will be positively associated with the adaptive scales of the Youth Coping Responses Inventory (YCRI; i.e., *Diversion*) and Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC; i.e., *Self-Esteem*). Factors on the measure will be negatively associated with the maladaptive scales of the YCRI (i.e., *Destructive Coping*) and BASC (i.e., *Depression*).

Phase I: Item Generation

Method

Procedure

The purpose of phase I was to create a pool of items to assess religious/spiritual beliefs and practices. Items were generated using revised items from existing adult measures as well as beliefs and behaviors discussed in existing literature. Informal interviews were conducted with a small group of youth from a Christian background in order to produce additional items. Items were generated to represent the following areas: beliefs, practices, and functional use of religion/spirituality (e.g., coping). Items were reviewed by a child clinical psychologist as well as by local clergy and parents from various monotheistic religious backgrounds. Clergy reviewers included leadership of the following religions and denominations: Islamic, Hindu, Catholic, Jewish, Methodist, Baptist, and nondenominational Christian. One parent (all mothers) each of the Islamic, Jewish, and nondenominational Christian communities also edited the items. Items were reviewed, redundant or biased items were eliminated, ambiguous items were clarified, and suggested items were added. These revisions resulted in a pool of 72 items.

Phase II: Item Selection/Retention and Reliability

Method

Participants

Participants included 307 youth, ages 9-17 ($M = 12.78$), spanning grades 4 through 12. The overall sample was predominantly Caucasian (70% Caucasian, 23% African American, 4% Other/Biracial, 2% Asian, 1% Hispanic). Males comprised 52% of the sample. Youth were recruited from local churches, religious organizations, and schools (both religiously and non-religiously affiliated). The sample was predominantly Christian due to the refusal of various religious groups and schools to participate (94% Catholic and Christian denominations, 4% None/Other, 2% Jewish). Demographic information is presented in Table 1. The sample reported an average frequency of prayer of 4-6 times per week and an average frequency of church attendance of 4-6 times per month.

Table 1: Demographic Information

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentages
N	307	
Age	M=12.78 (1.94)	
Gender		
Female	148	48%
Male	159	52%
Race		
Caucasian	215	70%
African American	70	23%
Other/Biracial	12	4%
Asian	6	2%
Hispanic	4	1%
Religion		
Catholic/Christian	289	94%
None/Other	12	4%
Jewish	6	2%

In order to obtain test-retest reliability information, data was collected from a sub-sample of the above participant pool approximately two to three months after initial administration. For this sub-sample, participants included 43 students obtained from two churches. This sample was comprised of students ages 10-17 ($M = 13.49$), in grades 4-11. Males comprised 61% of the sample and the sample was predominantly Caucasian (83% Caucasian, 12% African American, 5% Hispanic). The sample was comprised of Christian denominations (72% nondenominational, 19% Baptist, 9% Methodist).

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire. Youth completed a short demographic questionnaire in order to obtain descriptive data for the sample. The questionnaire included age, grade, gender, race, religious affiliation, frequency of prayer, and frequency of church attendance (see Appendix A).

Religiosity and Spirituality Scale for Youth (RaSSY; pilot version). The pilot version of the RaSSY generated in Phase I consisted of 72 items. Items were rated on a 4-point scale, ranging from 0="never" to 3="almost always," indicating the degree to which respondents participate in or agree with each item (see Appendix B).

Procedure

Following church/school approval, parent consent and child assent were obtained. In churches, parents were informed of the study initially according to church preferences, including a notice in the bulletin, an announcement in the church, a letter sent home, or setting up an information table. In schools, parents were informed of the study through letters and consent forms sent home. In all locations, parents could return consent forms to the church/school or mail completed forms to the researcher in postage-paid envelopes. Consent and assent forms included

statements regarding collecting data at a second time point (for test-retest reliability purposes).

Contact information for the researcher was also included on all forms.

Once parent consent was obtained, child assent was sought at the time of data collection, which occurred either during or after church, or during elective classes in schools. Assenting children completed the questionnaires in groups under the supervision of the researcher or research assistants. In order to minimize socially desirable responding, researchers made sure to emphasize in the oral directions that the data is confidential and that the participants should answer as honestly as possible.

For test-retest reliability data, assenting participants in two churches were re-administered the RaSSY approximately two to three months after the initial administration. Churches were chosen due to test-retest data being collected during the summer when schools were out of session. Particular churches were chosen based upon the church's willingness to have the researcher collect data on a second occasion, as well as the number of assenting children present.

Results

Initial Item Selection

Initial item analyses included examination of item frequencies, items means, and inter-item correlations. Items that were infrequently endorsed (less than 20% of the time) or that had extreme item means (i.e., do not approach the median value for responses) were considered for initial elimination (DeVellis, 2003). According to these criteria, no items were eliminated due to low frequency or means, but 20 items were eliminated due to high means (greater than 2.5). High means in these items indicated that most respondents endorsed the item as "always" occurring, and therefore the item did not discriminate well among participants. In addition, items with high

inter-item correlations (.70 or higher) were examined to determine if one item in the pair could be eliminated. No item pairs met this criterion.

Exploratory Factor Analyses

After initial item elimination was concluded, principle axis factoring (PAF) exploratory factor analyses were conducted for the purpose of determining if underlying dimensions were evident from the data. Analyses were conducted using a promax oblique rotation, since it is assumed that the factors would be correlated. Comrey and Lee (1992) suggest multiple criteria for determining factor solutions, including: factor loadings of .40 or greater, eigenvalues of 1.0 or higher, and simple structure (i.e., items load strongly on one factor only). Initial scree plot analyses suggested that a two-factor solution would account for the most variance; therefore, solutions forcing four, three, then two factors were explored. The two-factor solution resulted in the most interpretable factor structure. Using the criteria stated above, 15 items were eliminated due to factor loadings of less than .40 (see Table 2 for a list of all deleted items). Following the preliminary factor analysis, further item analyses were conducted for item-reduction purposes. Items with low item-total correlations (below .20; Floyd & Widaman, 1995) or items that resulted in an increase in reliability (i.e., Cronbach's alpha) of the factor when deleted were to be considered for elimination. No items met these criteria.

A final factor analysis using the remaining 37 items was conducted (see Table 3). Factor I, labeled *Faith-based Coping*, consists of 22 items that represent the use of religious beliefs, knowledge, and prayer to obtain comfort, strength, relief, or guidance. Factor II, labeled *Religious Social Support/Activities*, consists of 15 items that assess religious social support and participation in other religious activities. Religious social support is represented both by items that include seeking support from others in the religious community, and by items suggesting

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Table 2: Deleted Items

Item	Reason Deleted
I believe there is a God	High item mean
I pray alone	Failure to load
I pray with family	Failure to load
I get strength and support from God	High item mean
God has plans for my life	High item mean
When bad things happen, I get mad at God	Failure to load
God loves me	High item mean
God cares about me	High item mean
I attend religious classes, such as Sunday School	Failure to load
God is with me and takes care of me	High item mean
When bad things happen to me, I wonder if God is punishing me	Failure to load
God knows everything	High item mean
God put me on earth for a reason	High item mean
My belief in God is important to me	High item mean
God is there for me when I need Him	High item mean
When bad things happen, I question God's power to protect me	Failure to load
God created all things	High item mean
I would go to church/temple/mosque even if my parents didn't make me	Failure to load
I stand up for my religious beliefs when they are questioned by others	Failure to load
If I'm sorry, I can be forgiven by God for the things I do wrong	High item mean
God loves me the way I am	High item mean
I say a prayer or blessing before eating	Failure to load
I believe the holy scriptures are God's true word	High item mean
I worship God with song, chant, or words	Failure to load
There is a heaven waiting for me	High item mean
I live out my beliefs by helping others	Failure to load
When bad things happen, I lose faith in God	Failure to load
I forgive others when they hurt me	Failure to load
God cares about even my smallest problems	High item mean
I have friends at my church, temple, or mosque	High item mean
I only go to my church, temple, or mosque to see my friends	Failure to load
I praise/thank God when good things happen	High item mean
It makes me happy to be close to God	High item mean
When bad things happen, I try to bargain with God	Failure to load
Religious rituals are important to me	High item mean

giving support in some way (e.g., volunteering, donating money). This factor also includes items

assessing various activities related to religious media, such as reading scripture, watching

TV/movies, reading books, and listening to music with religious content or themes. A readability

analysis was conducted on the final 37-item RaSSY and resulted in a Flesch-Kincaid reading

grade level of 4.5. The final version of the RaSSY is presented in Appendix C.

Table 3: Factors and Factor Loadings

Item Description	Factor [a]	
	1	2
When I'm upset, I remind myself that God loves me	.81	(-.15)
God comforts me	.81	(-.13)
When bad things happen I know God will show me the answers	.78	(-.11)
My belief in God gives my life meaning	.77	(.06)
I have a close relationship with God	.76	(-.06)
When bad things happen I know God is trying to make me stronger	.74	(-.14)
When struggling, I ask God to help me understand	.74	(.02)
My beliefs about God help me decide what to do in hard situations	.65	(.11)
When trying to solve a problem, I ask God for help	.64	(.02)
When I am upset, I remind myself to be thankful for what I have	.63	(-.14)
My faith gives me hope in tough times	.63	(.14)
When I face a problem, I pray for God's help	.62	(.13)
Praying gives me strength when I'm upset	.62	(.18)
When bad things happen, I try to figure out what God is teaching me	.62	(.02)
My faith gives me feelings of peacefulness	.60	(.17)
I confess my sins to God	.60	(.04)
Knowing God is with me keeps me from feeling lonely	.54	(.17)
When I do something wrong, I ask for God's forgiveness	.52	(.12)
I believe God will not give me more than I can handle	.50	(.13)
When I'm worried, my faith helps me calm down	.48	(.21)
I find teachings about God interesting or helpful	.47	(.26)
My religious beliefs make me happy	.46	(.18)
I talk with others about my religious beliefs	(-.16)	.79
I give others spiritual advice	(-.04)	.72
I read books about God (other than holy scriptures)	(-.06)	.71
I watch religious TV shows or movies	(.01)	.69
I volunteer to help others based on my religious beliefs	(-.05)	.62
When I need help I go to people with my same religious beliefs	(.01)	.62
I spend time with kids who share my religious beliefs	(-.11)	.62
I say scriptures to myself when upset	(.09)	.59
I attend prayer groups	(-.07)	.58
I listen to religious songs or poetry about God	(.20)	.54
I give money based on my religious beliefs	(.08)	.52
I study/read scriptures	(.20)	.51

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Table 3 Continued

Item Description	Factor [a]	
	1	2
I ask other people to pray for me	(.17)	.49
I get support for people in my religious community	(.19)	.47
I pray in public	(.13)	.43
Eigenvalue	14.87	2.40
% Variance	40.19	6.47

[a] Factor 1 = Faith-based Coping(α = .94), Factor 2 = Religious Social Support/Activities (α = .90)

Reliability Analyses

Internal consistency analyses were conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to obtain reliability estimates. Both factors, as well as a composite combining the items on the two factors, demonstrated strong internal consistency estimates (α = .94 for *Faith-based Coping,* α = .90 for *Religious Social Support/Activities*, α = .95 for the composite). Test-retest reliability was conducted by correlating scores obtained at the two administrations for each factor. Scores were calculated using means due to differences in the number of items for each scale. Test-retest reliability was strong for the factors and composite (r = .71 for *Faith-based Coping*, r = .84 for *Religious Social Support/Activities*, r = .85 for the composite; all p's < .001). A correlation matrix is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Test-retest Correlations for RaSSY scales

	Time 2		
	Faith-based Coping	Religious Social Support/Activities	Composite Score
Time 1			
Faith-based Coping	.71**	.50**	.73**
Religious Social Support/Activities	.53**	.84**	.82**
Composite Score	.68**	.73**	.85**

** p < .001

Phase III: Initial Validation

Method

Participants

The sample of 307 youth described in Phase II was included in the validity analyses.

Measures

Youth Coping Responses Inventory (YCRI; Hernandez, Vigna, & Kelley, 2010). The YCRI is a 44-item measure that assesses coping responses in youth. Items load on three factors: *Diversion, Destructive Coping,* and *Ameliorative Coping. Diversion* assesses behaviors that divert attention from the problem (including family support, routines, and positivity) and has been shown to be the most adaptive coping factor. *Destructive Coping* assesses physical and self-destructive coping behaviors and is the most maladaptive coping factor. *Ameliorative Coping* assesses behaviors aimed at actively making the individual feel better about the problem. The measure indicated strong reliability (alpha's ranging from .85-.90) and adequate initial validity data. Reliability estimates were moderate to strong in the current sample (alpha's ranging from .74-.86).

Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition – Self-Report of Personality (BASC-2 SRP; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004)*. The BASC-2 SRP is a broadband self-report rating scale for adaptive and maladaptive behavior in children and adolescents. Two forms exist depending on youth's age. The child version (SRP-C) is appropriate from children ages 8-11, while the adolescent version (SRP-A) is used for youth ages 12-21. The SRP-C is a 139-item measure with 14 subscales, while the SRP-A contains 176 items on 16 subscales. For practicality and feasibility purposes, one adaptive (*Self-Esteem*) and one maladaptive (*Depression*) scale was chosen for inclusion in validity analyses. Scales were chosen based on literature cited above suggesting a positive or negative association with the domains measured. The *Self-Esteem* subscale includes eight

items that assess how positively youth view themselves to be. This scale shows adequate reliability data (alpha's ranging from .77-.83). The *Depression* subscale contains 12 items on the SRP-A version and 13 items on the SRP-C version that assess depressive symptoms. The subscale shows adequate reliability data (alpha's ranging from .84-.88). Additionally, items from the *L*-index were included to detect social desirability, or an overly positive response set. For each age group, the items on the *Self-Esteem, Depression,* and *L*-index subscales were combined and integrated into one short survey instrument.

Procedure

The YCRI and subscales of the BASC-2 SRP were administered in a packet along with the demographic questionnaire and the pilot version of the RaSSY as described in Phase II. Youth ages 9-11 had the SRP-C included in their packets, while youth ages 12-17 completed the SRP-A.

<div align="center">

<u>Results</u>

</div>

Construct Validity

Preliminary construct validity data was assessed through correlation analyses between the RaSSY factors and the factors of the YCRI (*Diversion*, *Destructive Coping*, and *Ameliorative Coping*) and BASC-2 SRP (*Depression* and *Self-esteem*). The BASC-2 *L*-index was used to screen for social desirability in response sets. The majority of participants' responses (98%) were rated as Acceptable. Six participants' responses (2%) were rated with Caution and no participants' responses were rated with Extreme Caution. All participants' data were included in the analyses. Due to the number of correlations being conducted, a Bonferroni correction was applied, and a more conservative *p*-value of .003 was used as the significance level. As hypothesized *Faith-based Coping* was positively related to *Diversion* ($r = .62$) and *Ameliorative Coping* ($r = .36$), and negatively correlated with *Depression* ($r = -.18$). *Religious Social*

Support/Activities was positively correlated with *Diversion* (*r* = .52) and *Ameliorative Coping* (*r* = .41). The composite score was also positively correlated with *Diversion* (*r* = .62) and *Ameliorative Coping* (*r* = .41). Validity correlations are presented in Table 5. Because the *Diversion* scale includes some religious-themed items, the correlations were reanalyzed removing these items, and still displayed significant positive correlations (*r* = .49 for *Faith-based Coping*; *r* = .41 for *Religious Social Support/Activities; r* = .49 for the composite).

Table 5: Validity Correlations for RaSSY, YCRI, and BASC Scores

	YCRI and BASC Scores				
	Diversion	Destructive Coping	Ameliorative Coping	Self-Esteem	Depression
Faith-Based Coping	.62**	-.13*	.36**	.12*	-.18**
Religious Social Support/Activities	.52**	.00	.41**	.11	-.08
Composite Score	.62**	-.08	.40**	.12*	-.16*

*p < .05; **p < .003*

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to develop a multidimensional measure of religiosity and spirituality using a sample of youth. In this study, religiosity was defined as one's beliefs and practices related to a religious affiliation or to God. Spirituality was defined as a unique, subjective, and personal application of one's religious beliefs and practices. The first aim of the study was to identify underlying dimensions in the data. Factor analysis results suggested a two-factor structure was most appropriate. Factor I, labeled *Faith-based Coping*, consists of items that assess the use of religious beliefs and practices specifically for coping purposes. The majority of items refer to receiving comfort or guidance during times of distress either through relying on beliefs or through taking an action, such as praying for strength. This scale also includes items that convey a close feeling with God or one's beliefs giving meaning to life, which also likely elicit feelings of comfort and purpose. Factor I, therefore, includes items that address both religiosity and spirituality, for the purpose of coping.

Factor II, labeled *Religious Social Support/Activities*, consists of items that assess the seeking of support from people in one's religious community, including other youth, in the form of asking for prayer, talking, and spending time with others. The factor also includes items that represent participation in public religious activities (e.g., prayer groups). Socially themed items also include the giving of support, either through spiritual advice, volunteering, or donating money. Finally, this factor includes items that measure participation in various religious activities, including watching religious TV/movies, reading books/scripture, and listening to religious music. These activities may also be done socially with other people (e.g., going to a religious movie or a concert with a religious band). Unlike Factor I, the support and participation in activities measured in Factor II do not necessarily occur with the purpose of coping with

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distress, but rather this factor represents a general measure of how frequently the behaviors occur. In addition, the items in Factor I generally represent the use of faith or an interaction with God, whereas items in Factor II generally represent interactions with others. As previously cited, caution should be used when considering religious practices alone as a measure of youth religiosity because parents often control these activities (Barnes et al., 2000). However, multiple items on Factor II represent social and religious activities that youth likely choose to do (e.g., giving others spiritual advice), rather than being forced to do by their parents, which may make the scale a more useful measure of religious activities.

The second aim of the study involved establishing reliability and readability estimates for the measure. Reliability analyses indicated that both factors and the composite showed strong internal consistency. The composite score, therefore, may be used as a general index of both religiosity and spirituality, or the two factors may be used to assess participation in specific coping, social, and religious activities. Test-retest reliability for the factors and composite was also good. It is expected that religious beliefs and practices are fairly stable, especially over a relatively short period of time. The *Religious Social Support/Activities* factor demonstrated stronger reliability than *Faith-based Coping*, which may indicate that religious and social activities are less variable over short periods of time than the use of coping. However, research does indicate that over long periods of time, participation in religious activities (especially those controlled by parents) decreases (Benson et al., 2006). Additionally, it is possible that ratings on *Faith-based Coping* change depending on the amount of distress or coping being used in the respondents' life at the time of measure completion. Finally, the readability analysis suggested that the measure is appropriate for youth who read at a fourth-grade level or higher.

The third goal of the current study was to provide preliminary validity data for the measure. Validity analyses indicated adequate to good initial validity data for the factors. It was hypothesized that higher scores on the RaSSY factors would be associated with higher scores on the *Diversion* scale from the YCRI and the *Self-Esteem* scale of the BASC-2. This hypothesis was only partially supported in that *Faith-based Coping* and *Religious Social Support/Activities* were positively related to the *Diversion* scale, but were not significantly associated with *Self-Esteem*. However, *Faith-Based Coping* and the composite score were weakly associated with *Self-Esteem* at the .05 significant level. The positive correlation between the RaSSY scales and *Diversion* is expected due to the *Diversion* scale including items related to the use of positive thinking and prayer/reliance on God to cope. It is possible that the factors were not strongly related to self-esteem because perhaps youth who are more religious/spiritual undergo peer pressure or judgment, which may counteract feelings of self-esteem they get from being firm in their religious beliefs.

Interestingly, both *Faith-based Coping* and *Religious Social Support/Activities* were also positively associated with *Ameliorative Coping*. This association makes sense because *Ameliorative Coping* contains items related to problem-solving and social support. Multiple items on the *Faith-based Coping* scale refer to reliance on God to help solve problems, and the *Religious Social Support/Activities* scale clearly includes items related to social interaction and support.

It was also hypothesized that the RaSSY factors would be negatively related to *Destructive Coping* and *Depression*. This hypothesis was partially supported in that higher scores on *Faith-based Coping* sclae were related to lower scores on the *Depression* scale, suggesting that more use of religious coping is related to fewer mood problems. *Religious Social*

Support/Activities was not significantly associated with *Depression,* and the composite score was only significantly associated with *Depression* at the .05 significance level. It could be that the use of coping to manage distress is more closely associated with mood than simply participating in social and religious activities that are not focused on coping. In addition, none of the RaSSY scales were related to *Destructive Coping*, which includes items pertaining to self-destructive and physically destructive responses to stress. However, *Faith-based Coping* was weakly related to *Destructive Coping* at the .05 significance level. Nevertheless, the weak, nonsignificant correlation between *Faith-based Coping* and *Destructive Coping* was unexpected because it was presumed that engagement in more adaptive, religious/spiritual coping would be related to lower levels of maladaptive coping responses.

Results of this study provide preliminary evidence that the RaSSY is a reliable, stable, and valid measure of religiosity and spirituality in youth. The measure was developed specifically for use with children and adolescents and was developed using a sample of youth of various ages and developmental levels. Development of the RaSSY is unique in that parents and youth from various denominations were able to give direct input for item generation. In addition, efforts were made to ensure that items were developmentally appropriate for youth in both wording and content. Finally, the reading level was lower than that of two of the three widely used adult religiosity measures reviewed in this study (i.e., the SWB and STS), providing further evidence that the RaSSY is more appropriate for youth samples. Because of its multidimensional nature, the measure is useful for assessing coping, but also for measuring the frequency of socially-based and general religious activities.

Despite the strengths of the results, this study has a number of limitations. First, although the measure was developed with the help of reviewers from various religions, the participating

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sample was predominantly from a Catholic/Christian background. This was due to the hesitation and refusal of many other religious groups to participate in data collection, as well as limited availability of groups of youth from diverse religions. All items that were included in the final measure were considered appropriate for youth from diverse religious backgrounds by reviewers, but actual data from these samples were not available to contribute to the development of the measure. In addition, the sample was predominantly made up of Caucasian youth, which may affect the generalizability of the results. Future studies aiming to refine the development of the RaSSY should seek to obtain reliability and validity data using larger, more racially and religiously diverse samples. Such studies may benefit from the inclusion of items that were deleted due to having a high mean, as the current sample was predominantly religious and it is possible that these items would be rated more variably by a more diverse sample. Future research may also benefit from using the RaSSY to study faith-based coping and activities following a significant, identified stressor (e.g., a trauma) to predict positive or negative outcomes.

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Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Age: _____

Grade: _____

Gender: _____

Race: _____

Religion (please check one):

_____ Catholic		_____ Lutheran	
_____ Non-denominational Christian		_____ Buddhist	
_____ Baptist		_____ Islamic	
_____ Methodist		_____ Hindu	
_____ Presbyterian		_____ None	
_____ Jewish		_____ Other (Specify: _____)	

How many times per <u>week</u> do you pray (Please check one)?

_____ 0-3　　_____ 4-6　　_____ 6-9　　_____ greater than 10

How many times per <u>month</u> do you attend church, temple, mosque, or youth group

_____ 0-3　　_____ 4-6　　_____ 6-9　　_____ greater than 10

Appendix B: Religiosity and Spirituality Scale for Youth (Pilot Version)

Directions: Many children and teens have different beliefs and activities related to God. Please read each item carefully and rate how often you do each activity or much you believe each item to be true. Use the following answer choices:

0 = I <u>never</u> do OR believe this
1 = I do OR believe this <u>some</u> of the time
2 = I do OR believe this <u>most</u> of the time
3 = I <u>always</u> do OR believe this

Note that the term <u>"holy scriptures"</u> refers to the holy writings of your religion, such as the Bible, Quran, or Torah.

Item	I do or believe this...			
	Never	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
1. My religious beliefs make me happy.	0	1	2	3
2. I believe there is a God	0	1	2	3
3. I pray in public.	0	1	2	3
4. I pray alone.	0	1	2	3
5. I pray with family.	0	1	2	3
6. I get strength and support from God.	0	1	2	3
7. God has plans for my life.	0	1	2	3
8. I study/read scriptures.	0	1	2	3
9. When I'm worried or nervous, my faith helps me calm down.	0	1	2	3
10. When bad things happen, I get mad at God.	0	1	2	3
11. God loves me.	0	1	2	3
12. When I need help, I go to people with my same religious beliefs.	0	1	2	3
13. I attend prayer groups.	0	1	2	3
14. God cares about me.	0	1	2	3
15. I attend religious classes, such as Sunday School.	0	1	2	3
16. Praying gives me strength when I'm upset.	0	1	2	3
17. When trying to solve a problem, I ask God for help.	0	1	2	3
18. I have a close relationship with God.	0	1	2	3
19. When I do something wrong, I ask for God's forgiveness.	0	1	2	3
20. I listen to religious songs or poetry about God.	0	1	2	3
21. God is with me and takes care of me.	0	1	2	3
22. I talk with others about my religious beliefs	0	1	2	3

Item	I do or believe this…			
	Never	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
23. When bad things happen to me, I wonder if God is punishing me.	0	1	2	3
24. God knows everything.	0	1	2	3
25. God put me on earth for a reason.	0	1	2	3
26. My faith gives me hope in tough times.	0	1	2	3
27. I watch religious TV shows or movies.	0	1	2	3
28. When I face a problem, I pray for God's help.	0	1	2	3
29. My belief in God is important to me.	0	1	2	3
30. I spend time with kids who share my religious beliefs.	0	1	2	3
31. Knowing God is with me keeps me from feeling lonely.	0	1	2	3
32. I find teachings about God interesting or helpful.	0	1	2	3
33. My belief in God gives my life meaning.	0	1	2	3
34. I believe God will not give me more than I can handle.	0	1	2	3
35. I read books about God (other than the holy scriptures).	0	1	2	3
36. God is there for me when I need Him.	0	1	2	3
37. I give money based on my religious beliefs.	0	1	2	3
38. When bad things happen, I question God's power to protect me.	0	1	2	3
39. God created all things.	0	1	2	3
40. I would go to my church, temple, or mosque even if my parents didn't make me.	0	1	2	3
41. When something bad happens, I know God is trying to make me stronger.	0	1	2	3
42. I stand up for my religious beliefs when they are questioned by others.	0	1	2	3
43. I volunteer to help others based on my religious beliefs.	0	1	2	3
44. If I'm sorry, I can be forgiven by God for the things I do wrong.	0	1	2	3
45. I ask other people to pray for me.	0	1	2	3
46. When bad things happen, I know God will show me the answers.	0	1	2	3
47. My beliefs about God help me decide what to do in hard situations.	0	1	2	3
48. God loves me the way I am.	0	1	2	3
49. I say a prayer or blessing before eating.	0	1	2	3

Item	I do or believe this...			
	Never	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
50. When I'm upset, I remind myself that God loves me.	0	1	2	3
51. I confess my sins to God.	0	1	2	3
52. When I'm upset, I remind myself to be thankful for what I have.	0	1	2	3
53. I believe the holy scriptures are God's true word.	0	1	2	3
54. I worship God with song, chant, or words.	0	1	2	3
55. When I'm struggling, I ask God to help me understand my situation.	0	1	2	3
56. I give others spiritual or religious advice.	0	1	2	3
57. I say scriptures to myself when I'm upset or scared.	0	1	2	3
58. There is a heaven waiting for me.	0	1	2	3
59. When bad things happen, I try to figure out what lesson God is trying to teach me.	0	1	2	3
60. I live out my beliefs by helping others.	0	1	2	3
61. When bad things happen, I lose faith in God.	0	1	2	3
62. I forgive others when they hurt me.	0	1	2	3
63. God cares about even my smallest problems.	0	1	2	3
64. I have friends at my church, temple, or mosque.	0	1	2	3
65. I only go to my church, temple, or mosque to see my friends.	0	1	2	3
66. My faith gives me feelings of peacefulness.	0	1	2	3
67. I praise/thank God when good things happen.	0	1	2	3
68. It makes me happy to be close to God.	0	1	2	3
69. I get strength and support from people in my religious community.	0	1	2	3
70. When bad things happen, I try to bargain with God.	0	1	2	3
71. Religious rituals and traditions are important to me.	0	1	2	3
72. God comforts me.	0	1	2	3

Appendix C: Religiosity and Spirituality Scale for Youth (Final Version)

Directions: Many children and teens have different beliefs and activities related to God. Please read each item carefully and rate how often you do each activity or much you believe each item to be true. Use the following answer choices:

0 = I <u>never</u> do OR believe this
1 = I do OR believe this <u>some</u> of the time
2 = I do OR believe this <u>most</u> of the time
3 = I <u>always</u> do OR believe this

Note that the term <u>"holy scriptures"</u> refers to the holy writings of your religion, such as the Bible, Quran, or Torah.

Item	I do or believe this…			
	Never	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
1. My religious beliefs make me happy.	0	1	2	3
2. I pray in public.	0	1	2	3
3. I study/read scriptures.	0	1	2	3
4. When I'm worried or nervous, my faith helps me calm down.	0	1	2	3
5. When I need help, I go to people with my same religious beliefs.	0	1	2	3
6. I attend prayer groups.	0	1	2	3
7. Praying gives me strength when I'm upset.	0	1	2	3
8. When trying to solve a problem, I ask God for help.	0	1	2	3
9. I have a close relationship with God.	0	1	2	3
10. When I do something wrong, I ask for God's forgiveness.	0	1	2	3
11. I listen to religious songs or poetry about God.	0	1	2	3
12. I talk with others about my religious beliefs	0	1	2	3
13. My faith gives me hope in tough times.	0	1	2	3
14. I watch religious TV shows or movies.	0	1	2	3
15. When I face a problem, I pray for God's help.	0	1	2	3
16. I spend time with kids who share my religious beliefs.	0	1	2	3
17. Knowing God is with me keeps me from feeling lonely.	0	1	2	3
18. I find teachings about God interesting or helpful.	0	1	2	3
19. My belief in God gives my life meaning.	0	1	2	3
20. I believe God will not give me more than I can handle.	0	1	2	3
21. I read books about God (other than the holy scriptures).	0	1	2	3

Item	I do or believe this…			
	Never	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
22. I give money based on my religious beliefs.	0	1	2	3
23. When something bad happens, I know God is trying to make me stronger.	0	1	2	3
24. I volunteer to help others based on my religious beliefs.	0	1	2	3
25. I ask other people to pray for me.	0	1	2	3
26. When bad things happen, I know God will show me the answers.	0	1	2	3
27. My beliefs about God help me decide what to do in hard situations.	0	1	2	3
28. When I'm upset, I remind myself that God loves me.	0	1	2	3
29. I confess my sins to God.	0	1	2	3
30. When I'm upset, I remind myself to be thankful for what I have.	0	1	2	3
31. When I'm struggling, I ask God to help me understand my situation.	0	1	2	3
32. I give others spiritual or religious advice.	0	1	2	3
33. I say scriptures to myself when I'm upset or scared.	0	1	2	3
34. When bad things happen, I try to figure out what lesson God is trying to teach me.	0	1	2	3
35. My faith gives me feelings of peacefulness.	0	1	2	3
36. I get strength and support from people in my religious community.	0	1	2	3
37. God comforts me.	0	1	2	3

Vita

Brittany Cornell Hernandez graduated *summa cum laude* with a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from Loyola University New Orleans in 2006. She began her graduate studies at Louisiana State University under Dr. Mary Lou Kelley in August of 2006 and earned her Master of Arts degree in psychology in May 2008. She is currently completing an internship in clinical child psychology at Nationwide Children's Hospital. She is working towards her Doctor of Philosophy degree in clinical psychology at Louisiana State University and will be receiving her degree in December 2011.