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# Inner Peace as a Contribution to Human Flourishing

## A New Scale Developed from Ancient Wisdom

*Juan Xi and Matthew T. Lee*

## Abstract

Although philosophers and theologians have emphasized the centrality of inner peace for the good life, this concept has not generally been included in research on human flourishing. We argue that inner peace contributes to a more complete form of flourishing for both religious and secular people. We then propose a new instrument, the Inner Peace Scale, to measure inner peace and we provide an initial psychometric evaluation of the instrument based on five empirical studies. We distinguish our scale from related measures, such as contentment, serenity, or tranquility. Our engagement with literature from the social sciences and the humanities, along with our research findings, suggests that inner peace is comprised of three dimensions: acceptance of loss; transcendence of hedonism and materialism; and inner balance and calmness. Greater attention to the dimension of transcending hedonism and materialism may prove especially helpful in advancing the field, particularly in consumeristic societies.

The past two decades witnessed a rapid expansion of social scientific interest in understanding components, conditions, and pathways to human flourishing and well-being, with 14,000 publications mentioning one aspect—subjective well-being—in a single year (Diener et al., 2017). Yet despite the proliferation, progress seems to be limited by conceptual disagreement with regard to the meaning of flourishing. Does this refer to a life without disorders or disturbance, a life full of pleasure and happiness, or a life that

is meaningful and serving a higher purpose but fraught with suffering? Or perhaps a life that is characterized by a profound peace which is beyond the dichotomies of pleasure or sorrow, passion or boredom, honor or dishonor, and living in opulence or poverty? In searching for the answer, many studies have investigated mental disorders, often viewed as the opposite of mental well-being. Studies on happiness and life satisfaction are also plentiful. Research interest on meaning in life and personal growth also well-established (Keyes, 2011; Ryff, 2014). But there has been little research attention paid to *inner peace*, a fundamentally balanced mental state that has been sought after throughout human history (Delle Fave et al., 2016). As a result, there are few discussions in the social science literature on the conceptualization and measurement of inner peace (Kjell, Daukantaite, Hefferon, & Sikström, 2016). The purpose of this chapter is to propose a new instrument, the Inner Peace Scale, to measure inner peace and provide an initial psychometric evaluation of the instrument.

But what is inner peace? There is a metaphor that has often been used to describe deep inner peace: the inner world of the mind is like a calm, quiet, and clear lake (Philippe, 2002, p. 5). It is a quiet that does not imply eventless or emptiness of inner experiences. But it does imply a different mode of inner experience which is always clear, gentle, and grounded no matter the nature of the outer events it is associated with. Just as a quiet lake clearly mirrors clouds, birds, and other happenings passing over it, people with deep inner peace experience their life happenings with great clarity. But just as a perfectly calm lake becomes disturbed during storms, so, too, is the experience of inner peace often transitory. Craving for what one does not have and worrying about losing what one does have can easily disrupt inner balance. However, unlike a natural lake, the calmness of which is not under its own control, people can cultivate and develop their inner peace by learning to experience life circumstances with healthy acceptance and avoid automatic (or "mindless") grasping. Drawing on cross-cultural insights from philosophy, theology, and the social sciences, we define inner peace as a calm and balanced mental state and disposition, one characterized by an attitude of healthy acceptance and an absence of unhealthy grasping.

The state of inner peace may be present in all life circumstances, including challenging or disturbing situations. Our definition is comprised of three distinct dimensions: *acceptance of loss*, *transcendence of hedonism and materialism*, and *inner balance and calmness*. A skillful ability to accept the inevitable losses that are an inherent part of the human condition, along with an

avoidance of undue fixation on transitory pleasures and things, fosters a calm and balanced mind. But the latter should not be seen only as an "outcome" because mental balance may also increase the ability to both accept and transcend. All three dimensions are likely related in a dynamic way. It might be helpful to understand the more general outcome of the three dimensions of inner peace in terms of the metaphor of habitually keeping one's "heart free of hatred" while accepting life as it is but *without* becoming complacent about wrongness or injustice (Baldwin, quoted in Hernandez, 2019). Indeed, empirical research reveals that a harmonious approach to life does not necessarily involve conflict avoidance or deflation of self, but in fact is associated with increased personal growth and a strong sense of purpose in a manner that integrates independent and interdependent conceptions of self (Kjell et al., 2016; see also Vallerand, 2008 on harmonious as opposed to obsessive passions). Such self-integration is helpful for working to transform conflict with more self-awareness and interpersonal skill.

A peaceful mental condition can be transitory, but it can also be developed into a stable mental disposition. It requires effort and understanding to develop and maintain this mental condition. As such, it can also be considered a mental process. By framing inner peace as a verb and a noun, we mean to suggest that it is possible to engage in accepting, transcending, and balancing practices; it is also possible to attain these states to a greater or lesser degree. However, measuring inner peace as a transitory mental state, a dynamic process, or a stable mental disposition would require different considerations and different instruments. The new measure introduced in this chapter focuses on inner peace as a relatively stable mental trait—a disposition or habit of mind that can be cultivated and is likely to vary over time—as a first step toward developing measures of mental states and processes. The development of a measure of inner peace as a trait might be especially important if, as some wisdom literature seems to indicate, the flourishing life is built on stable mental condition that is cultivated over a lifetime of philosophic, humanistic, or spiritual practice (Aurelius, 180/2006; Fleischman, 2004; Philippe, 2002). It is also plausible to hypothesize that those who have developed the stable disposition of inner peace will be more likely than others to become effective peace-builders in the world. We also expect that a trait-based measure of inner peace will show stronger relationships to peace-building and flourishing than a more transitory state-based measure.

The three dimensions (acceptance, transcendence, calmness) in our conceptualization may not represent an exhaustive list of all of the possible

elements that characterize inner peace. For example, an ability to perceive present reality in terms of the long range, the eternal, or the "big picture" might also be a dimension of inner peace. But we suggest that our three dimensions do address fundamental aspects of the human condition that tend to characterize inner peace and that they are grounded in rich philosophic and theological traditions, both East and West. They are applicable to theistic and non-theistic religious orientations as well as secular ones. As a result, this new measure may be useful across a broad range of cultural contexts. It could also inspire future measurement development and refinement.

## Inner Peace as a Cultural Universal

Inner peace has been known by many names across virtually all cultures, both as a desirable *end state of being* and as a *virtuous disposition* worthy of life-long cultivation through specific practices. It has been called the virtue of *good temper* by Aristotle (a disposition aimed at the balance point between excessive anger and indifference) and the highly sought state of mind known to ancient Greeks as *apatheia* (literally, "without passion" or "without suffering," but not indifferent). This Greek term is given somewhat different meanings by Orthodox Christians and Stoic philosophers, but the underlying experience seems to have analogs in other traditions, including one of the four "sublime" meditative states (*upekkhā*) mentioned in the Pali Canon of Buddhism (or *upekṣā* in Sanskrit, both generally rendered as *equanimity* in English). Similarly, Judaism posits *menuchat hanefesh* (peace of mind, resting of the soul) as an important foundation for moral and spiritual development. Hindus associate inner peace with transcending the illusory world of appearances in order to access *Brahman*: absolute reality beyond the distractions of ego. In Christianity, peace, as one of the nine fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), has been conceived as a necessary virtue developed through contemplation in order to reach union with divine love, as in the *Ladder of Divine Ascent* described by St. John Climacus in the seventh century. Cultivating a peaceful disposition, or alternatively receiving a gift of divine grace, might lead to an overall state of being that St. Paul described as the "peace of God" which "transcends all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). A sense of inner peace is captured by his celebrated words, "Love is patient, love is kind . . . it is not self-seeking . . . it keeps no record of wrongs" (1

Corinthians 13:4–5), and also by his exalted way of engaging with life: "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Philippians 4:12).

Inner peace has been understood as making important contributions to human flourishing in both religious and secular settings. In *The Mountain of Silence*, a study of Greek Orthodox Christianity as practiced by the contemporary monks who reside the isolated monasteries of Mount Athos, Kyriacos Markides (2002, p. 81) explains the theological significance of contemplative practices that cultivate inner peace.

> According to Athonite spiritual tradition, when a human being eradicates personal desires completely and reaches the state of *apathia* [liberation from egotistical passions], they become a "vessel of the Holy Spirit." Then whatever that person wishes is given because it is what God actually wishes. The consciousness of the saint is fully attuned with the spirit of God.

Despite their vastly different theologies, there is a strong resonance between this conception of the life of the Christian saint and the pious obedience to "the providential order of the Stoic cosmos" (Kapstein, 2013, p. 110) counseled in ancient Greece, as well as the "secular spirituality" (Lee, 2015, p. 275) evident in the contemporary mindfulness meditation movement and in 12-Step therapeutic groups. These paths all involve overcoming instinctual, hedonistic desires and developing a capacity to accept with equanimity the one's role as a servant of the transcendent, however that is defined. For example, a chapter on "Equanimity" in a nineteenth-century guidebook subtitled *Means of Moral Discipline to the Christian* warns against the dangers of "agitation" caused by "every trivial circumstance of life" to the "humbled heart," whose response to God should always be: "Thy will be done" (Seeley & Burnside, 1838, p. 53).

The 12 steps, originally pioneered by Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and now applied to many forms of addiction, cultivate a deep humility and a sense of spiritual *reliance* on a higher power rather than an overarching attitude of *defiance* (Lee et al., 2017). Such reliance reflects the notion of becoming a "vessel of the Holy Spirit" that animated the founders of AA. But they sought to make this process of connecting to a higher power and thus becoming more peaceful and giving available to the religious and non-religious alike. According to AA, defiance is "the outstanding characteristic of many an alcoholic" (Alcoholics Anonymous [AA], 1953, p. 31), because alcoholics tend

to exhibit a "baseline subjective sense of restlessness, irritability, and dis-content" (Sussman, 2010, p. 28)—the opposite of inner peace. The AA "Big Book" frames this lack of peace in terms of egocentrism: "Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us" (AA, 2001, p. 62). Such a state is not limited to those addicted to substances, as the downward trajectory in well-being in the United States in recent years may be partly a function of "a mass-addiction society" that includes many be-havioral addictions (Sachs, 2019, p. 124; Sussman, Lisha, & Griffiths, 2011). For 12-step groups, the path to recovery and well-being involves reliance on a higher power of one's own understanding, whether that might be a the-istic conception of God or the non-theistic good orderly discipline (G.O.D.) of the 12 steps. AA would generally concur with Bateson (1971, p. 3) that a "spiritual experience" involves "the myth of self-power" being "broken by the demonstration of a greater power" and, therefore, that a sense of flourishing or deprivation may follow depending on the degree to which the disposi-tion of inner peace is present during such experiences or is fostered by them. The decisive shift is from a self-centered, aggressive opposition to the world toward a "complementarity" (Bateson, 1971, p. 16) or "ontological intercon-nectedness" (Delle Fave et al., 2016, p. 1; Kjell et al., 2016) that manifests in benevolent service to others (Lee et al., 2017; Lee, Poloma, & Post, 2013).

This spirit of complementarity with the world—whether arrived at through religious or secular means—might be a bedrock foundation for flourishing that could help overcome the myriad conceptualizations and sometimes contradictory findings that seem to indicate a high level of dis-organization in the field. After all, grounding *complete well-being*—also la-beled *flourishing,* which includes physical health and social relationships (VanderWeele, 2017)—in hedonistic factors such as the balance of posi-tive and negative affect has proved challenging (King, 2001). Some cultural traditions normalize negative affect while others do not (Myers & Diener, 1995), and well-established social scientific traditions eschew hedonistic markers of well-being (Schneider, 2011). There is much more to flourishing than positive affect, and some are pushing back against what they describe as the "tyranny of the positive attitude" (McDonald & O'Callaghan, 2008, p. 128), despite the demonstrated value of such attitudes. And although often overlapping, the meaningful life is not always a happy one (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013; King, 2001; Lee et al., 2013).

By including transcendence of hedonism and materialism, a common religious and philosophic theme, our conception of inner peace provides a

different approach to well-being which may serve as an antidote to dominant pleasure-seeking cultural trends. Some of the markers of flourishing could serve as psychological defense mechanisms and "adaptive preferences" (Elster, 1983/2016), thus enabling acceptance of degrading conditions of various kinds. This includes the positive affect that some experience when viewing violent media, as well as the acceptance of inequities that increase mortality in some groups while providing others with a comfortable life of privilege. Such harmful effects are fundamentally inconsistent with inner peace because this is based on the thoughtful understanding of difficult life situations rather than automatic reactions of fear or avoidance. Existentialist philosophy and depth psychology have both explored the self-alienation that results from the conditioned acceptance of adaptive preferences and their attendant psychological defense mechanisms. Although it may be "a source of never-ending astonishment" to witness "how comparatively well a person can function with the core of himself not participating" (Horney, 1950, p. 161), this would hardly be a model of the flourishing life. In sum, our review of the world's great wisdom traditions and social science research suggests that attainment of inner peace may be a cultural universal that could provide a deeper principle to guide the development of the science of flourishing. However, inner peace is not generally included in social scientific studies on the topic, perhaps because a suitable measure has not yet been developed.

## Inner Peace and Well-Being in Social Science Research

Although inner peace has historically been considered an important indicator of well-being in both Western and Eastern cultures, it is rarely mentioned in modern social sciences. For example, psychological and mental health research have long focused on negative emotions and mental disorders (Fredrickson, 1998). This is to some degree due to the substantial array of problems imposed by such emotions and disorders on individuals and for society. However, the marginalization of positive mental experiences in theoretical development and empirical studies has been challenged by researchers arguing that the eradication of symptoms does not automatically lead to mental health and well-being (Keyes, 2005; Payton, 2009). Being well is more than just being free from problems. And people grow from dealing with their problems and achieve higher levels of well-being (Frankl, 1963;

Ryff, 2014). Indeed, the cultivation of positive mental functioning can be used as treatments of or prevention for mental health disorders and emotion problems. This has been evident in the success of the 12-step therapeutic approaches for different types of addictive behaviors and mindfulness-based interventions for a variety of mental disorders.

As researchers turn their attention toward the positive side of human experiences, a major focus has been on pursuing happiness and other high-arousal positive emotions such as joy and amusement. Hedonic happiness, defined as maximizing the pleasure in life, has become "the mascot for most of what is good and meaningful in life" (Cordaro, Glass, & Anderson, 2016, p. 221). The neglect of theoretical concepts describing human experience deeper than "feeling good" has been criticized as a "narrow band" investigation of well-being and flourishing (Schneider, 2011, p. 32). Moreover, researchers argue that the striving for happiness can be harmful because if well-being is reducible to feeling good, "drug abusers would be the happiest people on the planet" (Hayes, 2008, p. ix). Challenging the focus on pleasure-seeking hedonism, a purpose/growth-seeking eudaimonism has inspired further theory building and measurement developing of well-being. Drawn from Greek philosophy and multiple Western psychological traditions, Ryff's well-known psychological well-being model considers six dimensions of well-being: purpose in life, personal growth, environmental mastery, positive relationship, autonomy, and self-acceptance. However, inner peace was not a part of this influential conceptualization and operationalization of psychological well-being. Other frameworks of flourishing also omit a robust measure of this aspect (Delle Fave et al., 2016; Hone, Jarden, Schofield, & Duncan, 2014).

Very recently, research on low-arousal positive mental states which are similar to inner peace, such as contentment, tranquility, harmony, and serenity, started to emerge but in a very limited number and often with inconsistent conceptualization (Berenbaum et al., 2018; Cordaro et al., 2016; Kjell et al., 2016). There are also emerging discussions recently in the psychological literature on interesting new concepts such as "innate mental health" (Kelly, Pransky, & Lambert, 2015, p. 269), where the mind is at its natural healthy state without the contamination of egoistic feelings or thoughts, a state that can be considered to some degree similar to inner peace. However, inner peace, which is central to human experience of well-being, has not drawn much direct research attention. Delle Fave (2016, p. 8) and colleagues note that most research on the psychology of happiness imposes

a Western-biased, high-arousal, affect-based definition conceived a priori by scholars, whereas "harmony"—comprised of inner peace, balance, contentment, and psychophysical well-being—is preferred by laypersons from all countries (except Croatia). "Well-being," a broader category that includes happiness, has similarly been framed in self-centered ways in scientific research that orients survey respondents toward self-gratification and atomistic, individual notions of growth and self-actualization (Kjell et al., 2016). If given the option, the majority of the world's population seems to reject this selfish and individualistic construal of happiness, life satisfaction, and well-being. Laypersons—even those living in Western, individualistic, and non-traditional societies—instead prefer an inner harmony with self and outer harmony with others that speaks to the fundamental interconnectedness of all of life (Delle Fave et al., 2016). Although consistent with our synthesis of the literature, the conceptualization of harmony as inclusive of psychophysical well-being (Delle Fave et al., 2016) is perhaps too broad, while the five-item measure of harmony developed by Kjell et al. (2016) is perhaps too narrow to encompass all of the domains of inner peace. Nevertheless, the work of these scholars has helped reveal significant limitations in the extant literature and provides a helpful foundation for the development of our multidimensional measure.

## Inner Balance, Acceptance, and Transcendence

Although known by different names, an *engaged balance* or *equanimity* as perhaps the core characteristic of inner peace is shared by different cultural traditions and approaches. "Engaged balance" means that inner peace is an active mental state as a person actively participates in life situations in the manner described by St. Paul and others reviewed earlier. It is not avoidance or indifference (Philippe, 2002). Individuals make efforts to find and maintain inner balance or equanimity rather than passively follow the default mental model, which tends to produce automatic reactions to stimuli in the environment (e.g., perceive a threat, feel the fear, and react with avoidance) (Farb et al., 2007; Fredrickson, 1998; Horney, 1950; Singer, 2007; Williams & Penman, 2011). In a reactive mode of living, we are "tossed to and fro" by life, with limited freedom, awareness of mental processes, and ability to make conscious choices (Oldfather, quoted in Kapstein, 2013, p. 106). Engagement means that we do not have to react with anger and revenge after an insult, or,

when enticed by a commercial, we can choose not to crave and go shopping. Instead, we can consciously maintain inner balance which facilitates reflection on the most constructive response. A person with deep inner peace lives life fully without shunning unpleasant experiences, the opposite of experiential avoidance or spiritual bypass (Fox, Cashwell, & Picciotto, 2017) or purposely pursuing pleasant experiences as do modern Western materialists (Belk, 1988; Richins & Dawson, 1992). As such, inner peace belongs to a free person who bears the gifts and losses of fortune with equanimity (Spinoza, 1677/1996). In the Catholic tradition, for example, inner peace "has nothing to do with any type of impassivity, extinction of sensitivity, cold indifference or being wrapped up in oneself" (Philippe, 2002, p. 7). Instead,

> [i]t is the necessary corollary of love, of true sensitivity to the sufferings of others and of an authentic compassion. Because only this peace of heart truly liberates us from ourselves. . . [and] only one who possesses this interior peace can efficaciously help his neighbor. (Philippe, 2002, p. 7)

It takes a lot of effort and practice to understand and overcome the automatic mental model. According to both Eastern and Western traditions, freedom from the rule of the habitual mental and behavior patterns is developed from an understanding of the transitory nature of all phenomena, all life circumstances—pleasant or unpleasant—and the necessity of changes. This understanding of the ephemeral, transitory nature of the world of appearance enables one to transcend one's self-identification with specific people, things, and life situations, and the associated inner experiences, including sensations, emotions, and thoughts constructed by one's ego (Kabat-Zinn, 2010; Safran & Segal, 1990; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2013). "Sadness over some good which has perished is lessened as soon as the man who has lost it realizes that this good could not, in any way, have been kept" (Spinoza, as cited by Nadler, 2016). Because of the impermanent nature of all things, life is like a constant flow, and a wise person who lives in equanimity enjoys life without falling into either avoidance or clinging (Hart, 1987). This is reflected in the idea of Confucianism that when there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind is centered in equilibrium (Feng, 1948).

Engaged inner balance as the essential component of inner peace can be considered as the unique feature to distinguish inner peace from similar low-arousal positive mental states and other indicators of well-being that have been documented in the literature. Inner peace is different from tranquility

because it is not an absence of movement or activity (Ellsworth & Smith, 1988). One can deal with challenging life situations with inner peace. It is also different from contentment, which has been described as a mental state associated with a "perceived wholeness" (Cordaro et al., 2016) because one can experience a sense of incompleteness and still maintain a peaceful mind. However, tranquility and contentment could foster inner peace. Finally, inner peace is also different from the emptiness of emotion because one fully experiences emotions while also being free from the stirring/disturbance that accompanies such emotions. A person with inner peace experiences his or her emotions in a balanced way.

According to multiple wisdom traditions, this inner balance or equanimity exists in the absence of stirring or disturbance from two opposite directions: (1) feelings and actions against undesirable or unpleasant experiences and (2) feelings and actions toward the acquisition of desirable or pleasant experiences. The absence of aversion, in a practical sense, means encountering undesirable or unpleasant experiences with complete acceptance (Boyd-Wilson & Walkey, 2015). With unconditional acceptance, one can engage with difficult life situations without reacting with negative emotions and actions (Kabat-Zinn, 2010; Segal et al., 2013). It is helpful to note that prayer, religious ritual, mindfulness meditation (including secular versions), and many other practices can help to cultivate such acceptance, but our interest is in developing a measure of the trait of inner peace, rather than exploring the pathways that might cultivate it. Of course, due to the impermanent nature of life, losses in different aspects of life are constantly encountered by individuals, such as losing a valued thing, a relationship, a status, a nice feeling, a good job, etc. It is therefore not surprising that many religious and secular teachings are focused on acceptance of loss. A person with inner peace would accept these losses and treat them similarly to other changes in life. Because the sense of inner balance or equanimity can be maintained in all situations, inner peace is not just the absence of disturbance but also can be considered as beyond disturbance from any life circumstances (De Rivera & Paez, 2007).

The equilibrium of the inner world can be broken from another direction—desires and actions directed to the acquisition of pleasant experiences. This viewpoint is shared by Greek philosophers who see egoistic passion as a threat to inner peace (Markides, 2001), by teachers of world major religions who see material possession and sensory pleasure as hindrance to spiritual growth, and by members of Eastern cultures who tend to value balance and

harmony more than excitements and pleasures (Lee, Poloma, et al., 2013; Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006). Dangers associated with clinging to or craving for pleasant experiences are especially emphasized by Buddhism. As stated in the *Platform Sutra of the Six Patriarch*, all sufferings are developed from egoistic pleasure-seeking. Embodied in the Buddha's four noble paths, true well-being can only emerge when one completely quiets all one's desires and stays in the natural peaceful mind (Kornfield, 2011). Similar ideas were stated repeatedly among Stoics and Western philosophers. For example, Spinoza considers too much love for things that are doomed to perish as a kind of sickness of mind. To him, positive affects, such as passionate love and joy, restrict our autonomy and threaten our well-being just as do negative ones (Spinoza, 1677/1996).

This idea has also been emphasized by modern positive psychologists, who have found in empirical research that pleasant feelings are short-lived, and, in most cases, people don't get happier in the long run (Diener, Lucas, & Scollon, 2006; Myers, 1992). The reason is simple: "every desirable experience—passionate love, a spiritual high, the pleasure of a new possession, the exhilaration of success—is transitory" (Myers, 1992, p. 53). However, for members of consumeristic cultures (Belk, 1988), it may be hard to conceive that a mind seeking after pleasure is at risk of losing its balance. In the culture of materialism, where a large proportion of a society desires to consume goods for pleasure and happiness (Belk, 1988; Sointu, 2005), there is a danger that questions such as the sustainability of hedonic happiness, whether or not pleasure-seeking would harm long-term well-being, or how the taken-for-granted lifestyle such pleasure-seeking requires might impact the broader ecology, are not consciously evaluated. To live in inner peace does not mean one must eliminate sensory pleasure and happiness. Peaceful people enjoy pleasure and happiness with an engaged balance and without craving for unhealthy levels. When maximizing pleasure in life is exalted as the culturally desired goal, and people seek their happiness "fix" (Hayes, 2008, p. ix) with more achievements, social relationships, wealth, power, spiritual rapture, etc., inner peace recedes to the background and is seldom used as an indicator for inner health. In the face of the hedonistic and materialistic culture spreading across the globe, finding inner peace may require awakening from and transcending such pleasure-seeking and consumer-driven cultural norms.

Based on the preceding discussion, we conceptualize inner peace as an engaged inner balance, acceptance of loss, and transcendence of hedonism

and materialism. In the next section, we present five studies on the construction and evaluation of a new and brief instrument for inner peace based on our conceptualization. All original data collection was approved by the University of Akron's Institutional Review Board.

## Study 1: Scale Construction and Factor Structure of the Inner Peace Scale (IPS)

### Method

#### Participants and Procedures

Although a nationally representative sample would be ideal for studying inner peace, we used a sample of college students as a reasonable place to start the scale construction. Data were obtained from a sample of students enrolled in introduction to sociology courses and research methods courses in the spring semester of 2018 at a large, Midwestern US university (Sample A). All students in these courses received a link to take the survey online through the Qualtrics platform. All participating students received extra course credit in return for their participation.

Sample descriptive statistics are reported in Table 15.1. Sample A ($n = 557$) was composed of 332 females (59.6%) and 225 males (40.4%), with a mean age of 20.23 (standard deviation [$SD$] = 4.98). About two-thirds of the sample were white (65.0%), 23% were black, about 6% were Asian, and another 6% were of other races. Forty-one percent of respondents were self-identified as Christian, 19% self-identified as Catholic, 17% as other religions such as Muslim or Buddhist, and about 23% considered themselves nonreligious.

#### Measure

As mentioned in the previous section, we defined inner peace as a fundamentally balanced mental condition that is beyond the influence of one's particular life experiences and their affective valence (pleasant, unpleasant, neutral). We further divided the concept of inner peace into three dimensions: (1) free from being depressed or troubled by undesirable life conditions, (2) free from craving for or clinging to desirable life conditions, and (3) maintaining a mind with calmness and inner balance. As suggested in the literature, understanding the transitory nature of life situations is critical for inner balance, transcendence, and acceptance. Accordingly, when

**Table 15.1** Descriptive statistics for samples

| | Sample A (n = 557) | | Sample B (n = 46) | | Sample C (n = 81) | | Sample D (n = 106) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean(sd)/ Proportion | n | Mean(sd)/ Proportion | n | Mean(sd)/ Proportion | n | Mean(sd)/ Proportion | n |
| *Age* | 20.2(5.0) | 553 | 21.8(5.9) | 46 | 21.0 (4.8) | 81 | 22.8(2.4) | 106 |
| *Gender* | | | | | | | | |
| Female | 59.6 | 332 | 58.7 | 27 | 70.4 | 57 | 75.47 | 80 |
| Male | 40.4 | 225 | 41.3 | 19 | 29.6 | 24 | 24.53 | 26 |
| *Race* | | | | | | | | |
| White | 65 | 362 | 80.4 | 37 | 69.2 | 56 | | |
| African American | 22.8 | 127 | 6.5 | 3 | 16.5 | 13 | | |
| Asian | 5.6 | 31 | 8.7 | 4 | 4.9 | 4 | 100 | 106 |
| Native American | 1.1 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 1.23 | 1 | | |
| Other races | 5.6 | 31 | 4.4 | 2 | 8.64 | 7 | | |
| *Hispanic origin* | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 3.8 | 21 | 8.7 | 4 | 2.47 | 2 | | |
| No | 96.2 | 536 | 91.3 | 42 | 97.53 | 79 | 100 | 106 |
| *Religious background* | | | | | | | | |
| Christian | 40.8 | 225 | 23.9 | 11 | 37 | 30 | | |
| Catholic | 19.1 | 105 | 17.3 | 8 | 11.1 | 9 | | |
| Other religion | 17.2 | 95 | 17.3 | 8 | 12.3 | 10 | | |
| None or nothing specific | 22.9 | 126 | 41.3 | 19 | 39.5 | 32 | | |

we chose the wording of the questions, we emphasized the understanding of the impermanent nature of life. Guided by this conceptualization, we developed a pool of 22 items covering all three dimensions (Table 15.2). The 22 items were included in the online survey administered to the 557 college students (Sample A). Response choices followed a 5-point Likert-style scale with 1 = Almost never and 5 = Almost always. We reverse-coded items that measured inner peace from a negative direction. Stata 15.1 was used for the analysis. There were only a few cases with missing values. Listwise deletion was used for missing values.

## Results

### Exploratory Factor Analysis

As the initial effort for scale development for inner peace, we intentionally included a larger number of items than desired. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was utilized to clarify factor structure and identify a set of best indicators for the concept. In doing so, Sample A was randomly split into two halves, with one half serving as the calibration sample and the other half as the validation sample. Using the calibration sample ($n = 278$), we started with an EFA on the 22 items using the principal factor method to extract factors. The first three factors extracted accounted for 90% of total common variances. Although the third eigenvalue (0.89) was relatively smaller, it accounted for 11% of the total common variances and the Scree plot showed a clear three-factor pattern. After we reran the analysis by restricting the number of factors to 3, there were quite a few items which had low loadings on all three factors. With a careful study of the correlation matrix, we found that there were six items that had near zero or weak correlations ($r < 0.30$) with all other variables. Not surprisingly, the six items had high uniqueness in the EFA, which means a large proportion of their variance was not shared by other items or accounted for by the three factors. We deleted these 6 items. There were still three items in the EFA with uniqueness greater than 0.75. We excluded these three items also.

In the next round of EFA with the remaining 13 items, our goal was to further clarify the factor structure and interpret the factors. For this purpose, promax rotation was utilized for its ability to account for correlations among latent factors (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999). This analysis revealed a three-factor model with seven items loaded on factor 1, three

Table 15.2 Inner Peace Scale item–factor structure and loadings from the results of confirmatory factor analysis on the validation portion of Sample A ($n = 279$)

| | Standardized | Unstandardized (SE) | Scale Reliability | ITC | Item Mean | Item SD | Missing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Factor 1: Acceptance of loss** | | | 0.72 | | | | |
| 1. I find myself in a prolonged sadness when I lose something I really like. (reverse coded) | 0.7 | 1.00 (0.00) | | 0.64 | 2.88 | 1.17 | 1 |
| 2. I find myself worried about losing something or someone. (reverse coded) | 0.64 | 0.88 (0.11) | | 0.63 | 2.35 | 1.12 | 1 |
| 3. I am troubled by the thought that nothing lasts forever. (reverse coded) | 0.7 | 1.11 (0.13) | | 0.63 | 3.06 | 1.28 | 2 |
| **Factor 2: Inner balance and calmness** | | | 0.78 | | | | |
| 4. I find that my mind is very calm and quiet. | 0.74 | 1.00 (0.00) | | 0.59 | 2.74 | 1.22 | 1 |
| 5. I feel a profound sense of peace in my mind. | 0.86 | 1.10 (0.10) | | 0.59 | 3.03 | 1.16 | 4 |
| 6. I maintain a balanced mind when bad things happen to me. | 0.59 | 0.69 (0.09) | | 0.57 | 3.13 | 1.07 | 3 |
| **Factor 3: Transcending hedonism and materialism** | | | 0.63 | | | | |
| 7. When I am in a very positive situation, I wish that it would last forever. (reverse coded) | 0.49 | 1.00 (0.00) | | 0.43 | 1.78 | 0.95 | 1 |
| 8. I am happiest when I get what I want. (reverse coded) | 0.59 | 1.21 (0.22) | | 0.41 | 2.38 | 0.94 | 1 |
| 9. I find myself craving for things or pleasant feelings. (reverse coded) | 0.7 | 1.47 (0.29) | | 0.55 | 2.27 | 0.97 | 1 |

**Items excluded after the second round of EFA**

When I experience an unpleasant situation, it is hard for me to stay calm.

When things are not going my way, I become irritated.

I am easily frustrated.

I find my mind is disturbed by things that happen to me.

**Items excluded after the first round of EFA**

When I am in a very pleasant situation, I remind myself that it can change.

I try to push away or avoid things that I do not like.

When I stuck in a bad traffic jam, I remind myself that I will not be

stuck there forever.

When I am upset, I remind myself that things will change.

When I encounter an unexpected problem such as a flat tire, I can

smile at the situation.

I maintain a balanced mind when good things happen to me.

I easily accept changes in my life.

I feel peaceful even when bad things happen to good people.

I feel an urge to fix the situations that I do not like.

on factor 2, and three on factor 3. The three items loaded on factor 3 were clearly measuring craving for or clinging to hedonistic experiences or material gratification. We labeled this factor as "Transcending hedonism and materialism." The three items loaded on factor 2 were quite obviously centered on a balanced and peaceful mind. We labeled this factor "Inner balance and calmness." However, the items loaded on factor 1 were not easy to interpret. Three of the seven items were focused on mental experiences associated with loss. The other four items were about different negative emotions such as the feeling of irritation and frustration, but lacked a clear, conceptual focus. Guided by our conceptualization of inner peace, and also to keep a balanced factor structure, the three items focusing on the acceptance of loss were retained and the other four items were excluded. We labeled factor 1 "Acceptance of loss." We reran the EFA. The factor structure was quite clear. All loadings were substantial. After these three rounds of EFA, we reached a three-factor nine-item structure with three items loaded on each factor. The item-factor structure was reported in Table 15.2. Next, we subjected this measurement model for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the validation half of Sample A ($n = 279$).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To confirm the three-factor solution, CFA with Maximum Likelihood estimation was utilized. The model had a good fit: $\chi^2$ [24] = 41.39, $p < 0.001$; $\chi^2$/df = 1.72; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.05, and 90% confidence interval (CI) for RMSEA was (0.02, 0.08); comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.97; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.95; standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.04; CD = 0.98. Only a few normalized residuals had an absolute value around 2. Standardized loadings were within the range of 0.49 and 0.86, which are reported in Table 15.1. The item-total correlations (ITC) were between 0.41 and 0.64. Comparing standardized loadings across factors, loadings on "Inner balance and calmness" and "Acceptance of loss" were quite strong, while loadings on "Transcending hedonism and materialism" were not as strong as those for the other two factors. When comparisons were made within the factors, the item "craving for things or pleasant feelings" was the strongest indicator for "Transcending hedonism and materialism." Similarly, feeling "a profound sense of peace" was the driving item for "Inner balance and calmness." All three items on "Acceptance of loss" had similar loadings. Turning

to associations among factors, "Acceptance of loss" was substantially correlated with the other two factors (0.53 with "Inner balance and calmness" and 0.46 with "Transcending hedonism and materialism" in the CFA model). However, "Transcending hedonism and materialism" had a weak correlation (0.16) with "Inner balance and calmness," which was only marginally significant ($p = 0.06$).

Multigroup CFA (MGCFA) was conducted to determine if the measurement model represented the data well in different groups (Bollen, 1989; Kline, 2016). Due to the small size of some groups, we used all 557 participants in Sample A. Assuming the same model form for different groups, an unconstrained model with all parameters freely estimated for different groups was first estimated (Acock, 2013; Bollen, 1989). We then constrained all loadings to be the same across groups. An insignificant likelihood ratio test would suggest measurement invariance across groups. Following this strategy, measurement invariance across gender groups was first evaluated. The unconstrained model had adequate fit ($\chi^2$ [78] = 154, $p$ < 0.001; $\chi^2$/df = 1.9; RMSEA = 0.06; CFI = 0.93; TLI = 0.93; SRMR = 0.06). The constrained model with all loadings set to be equal across gender groups fitted data as well as the unconstrained model. The result indicated that the three-factor nine-item model fitted both males and females equally well. We extended the analysis to comparing factor means and factor variances. The results indicated that females had lower means on all three factors, but there was not enough evidence to suggest different factor variances across gender groups. Measurement invariance across racial groups was also evaluated. Due to the relatively low number of racial minorities in the sample, the comparisons were made between whites and non-whites. We found that the measurement model fitted both whites and non-whites equally well with only a few exceptions. While there was no sufficient evidence for unequal loadings, white participants did have a lower mean on "Inner balance and calmness," and the variances for "Acceptance of loss" and "Transcending hedonism and materialism" were slightly greater among non-whites. The model also fitted Christian and non-Christian groups equally well, a further indication of measurement invariance.

To display group variations in a more straightforward way, three factor scores were created, and group comparisons on the three factor scores are reported in Table 15.3. Consistent with MGCFA, females scored lower on "Acceptance of loss," "Transcending hedonism and materialism," and "Inner

**Table 15.3** Bivariate correlation between equanimity factors (factor scores) and demographic and religious variables[a]

|  | Acceptance | Transcendence | Inner balance | IPS (summary score) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female | −0.16*** | −0.09* | −0.15*** | −0.21*** |
| White | −0.04 | −0.01 | −0.11* | −0.08 |
| Christian | 0.07 | −0.06 | 0.11* | 0.06 |
| Nonreligious | −0.08 | 0.07 | −0.10* | −0.05 |
| Pray often | 0.07 | −0.03 | 0.18*** | 0.12** |
| Spirituality | 0.09* | 0.01 | 0.22*** | 0.16*** |
| IPS (summary score) | 0.81*** | 0.61*** | 0.70*** | – |

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

[a] Nonreligious was coded as 1 for those who self-identified as atheist, were not sure if there is a God, or believed in nothing in particular. "Pray often" was measured by the question "How often do you pray or meditate" with five ordinal response choices: never (1), very little (2), some (3), frequently (4) and almost daily or more (5). Spirituality was measured by the question "How important is spirituality in your life" with five ordinal response choices ranging from 1 = Not at all important to 5 = Extremely important.

balance and calmness." Whites scored lower on "Inner balance and calmness," but Christians scored higher on this dimension. This was slightly different from the MGCFA results. The three factor scores were all strongly correlated with the summary score of the whole scale.

## Conclusion

Using a sample of college students, this study proposed and initially evaluated the structure of a three-factor nine-item scale for measuring the concept of inner peace. The three-factor nine-item structure found from EFA using the calibration sample was confirmed in the CFA using the validation sample. Subsequent MGCFA affirmed measurement invariance across the gender groups, racial groups, and religious groups. Although the model fitted the data well, further evaluation of validity and reliability of the scale was needed.

## Study 2: Reliability Assessment of the Inner Peace Scale

In this study we assessed test-retest reliability and internal consistency of the IPS.

## Method

### Participants and Procedures

In the fall semester of 2018, a total of 48 college students at a large, Midwestern US university participated in a randomized controlled trial on a mindfulness meditation intervention to improve concentration and well-being as a waiting-list control group for which they received cash rewards. The original study used the IPS in their two online surveys, which were 6 weeks apart. The 48 students in the control group were not contacted at all in the 6 weeks between the two online surveys. Of the 48 students, 46 completed both surveys. Data on the 46 students (Sample B) were used for test-retest reliability assessment. To assess the internal consistency, we relied on data collected from the 557 students of Sample A.

As reported in Table 15.1, Sample B ($n$ = 46) was composed of 27 females (58.7%) and 19 males (41.3%), with a mean age of 21.8 ($SD$ = 5.9). More than three=fourths of the sample were white (80.4%) and 91.3% were non-Hispanic. Eleven respondents self-identified as Christian (23.9%), eight participants self-identified as Catholic (17.3%), another eight participants as other religions, and 41.3% reported no specific religion or considered themselves as nonreligious.

### Measure

In the two surveys involving the 46 students, only eight of the nine IPS items were included due to human error. The omitted item was "I maintain a balanced mind when bad things happen to me." As indicated in Table 15.1, it was the weakest indicator for the factor "Inner balance and calmness." As a result, we can only evaluate the test-retest reliability of the eight items. However, the internal consistency analysis was based on all the nine items identified in Study 1.

## Results

*Test-retest reliability*. To quantify the test-retest reliability, we used the intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) for absolute agreement derived from a two-way random-effects model (McGraw & Wong, 1996). The ICC for average measurements calculated for the summary IPS was 0.85 ($p < 0.0001$), indicating good test-retest reliability.

  *Internal consistency*. Using data from the 557 students (Sample A), we calculated the Cronbach's α for the nine items, which was 0.73, indicating acceptable internal reliability. To take into consideration measurement error in assessing internal consistency, the scale reliability (SR) coefficient (Acock, 2013) was calculated for each latent factor. They are reported in Table 15.1. The internal consistency for "Inner balance and calmness" and "Acceptance of loss" were good (SR = 0.78 and SR = 0.73, respectively). The SR coefficient for "Transcending hedonism and materialism" (SR = 0.63) was a little lower than 0.7.

## Discussion

The evaluation of the reliability of the IPS indicated that the scale had good test-retest reliability. The internal consistency was good for "Inner balance and calmness" and "Acceptance of loss" but was a bit weak for "Transcending hedonism and materialism." The results were consistent with the findings reported in Study 1. The loadings for indicators for "Transcending hedonism and materialism" were relatively lower than those for the other two factors. For example, the loading for the item "when I am in a very positive situation, I wish that it would last forever" was 0.49. This might due to the wording of the item. The question did not describe a specific situation, which might lead to more measurement errors. Frequency distribution indicated that a great majority of the sample reported that they either strongly agree or agree with the statement. The small standard deviation of the item also signaled homogeneity in responses to this item. The mean and the standard deviation on the other two items ("I am happiest when I get what I want" and "I find myself craving for things or pleasant feelings") were also lower than those of indicators for the other two factors. Taking all these together, the sample was relatively homogeneous on the factor of transcending hedonism and materialism in the direction of lower inner peace.

The dominant consumer culture in the US society might have contributed to the difficulties of measuring inner peace, which requires transcending superficial happy feelings and instant material gratification. Individuals in this culture are encouraged to pursue hedonistic happiness, and their personal achievements/successes are evaluated by wealth and material possession (Richins & Dawson, 1992). People in this culture would think it is legitimate to feel happiest when they get what they want, and they may not consider how desiring for things or pleasant feelings may inhibit their inner peace. As a result, respondents might interpret the two items without the term "craving" slightly differently from the item with the term "craving" which bears a negative connotation. A lower internal consistency might therefore result.

The lower internal consistency for this factor could also due to sample-specific characteristics. College students are young and may not be able to differentiate experiences associated with true happiness and those with instant gratification, which could be problematic for mental health in the long run. If this is the case, higher levels of measurement error could be a result. Future work should focus on improving the wording of the indicators for "Transcending hedonism and materialism" or using samples of community adults to evaluate the IPS.

## Study 3: Validity Assessment of the Inner Peace Scale

In assessing the measurement validity of the IPS, we started with face and content validity (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). According to our conceptualization of inner peace, the scale covered all three theoretical dimensions of the concept, which suggested a certain level of content validity. After weeding out the extra items for the "Acceptance of loss," the final three-factor nine-item scale had obvious face validity. As indicated by the loadings reported in Table 15.1, all items were substantially loaded on the factor it measured. There were no significant cross-loadings suggested by the normalized residual matrix or the Lagrange multiplier tests. The correlations among the three factors (as reported in Study 1, the highest correlation is 0.53) were not high enough for us to suspect that they completely overlapped with each other. After this first step in validity evaluation, the focus of this study was on the construct validity of the IPS (Carmines & Zeller, 1979).

To establish construct validity, there should be evidence showing that the scale is sufficiently correlated with diverse, theoretically related variables

(Carmines & Zeller, 1979). We expected several theoretically relevant constructs to be substantially correlated with the sense of inner peace. First, a peaceful mind is a healthy mind. A person who lives in inner peace should suffer less from anxiety, depressive moods, rumination, and difficulties in emotion regulation. We expect strong negative correlations between IPS and symptoms of these mental health disorders. We believe that inner peace is an indicator for mental well-being. It should be positively associated with other indicators of well-being. For example, a person living in inner peace would have high levels of self-compassion and general psychological well-being. Research on mindfulness has found that the present-moment focus of mindfulness practices enhances the feeling of balance and equilibrium (Desbordes et al., 2015; Pagis, 2015). We also anticipated a positive correlation of IPS with mindfulness.

## Method

### Participants and Procedures
Sample A was used for construct validity assessment.

### Measures
The following measures were used.

*Center for Epidemiological Study–Depression* (CESD; Radloff, 1977): Participants of Sample A completed the 20-item CESD scale, which assesses depressive symptoms (e.g., "I felt depressed"). Responses were scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (Not at all in the past 7 days) to 3 (Nearly every day in the past 7 days), with higher scores indicating more depressive symptoms.

*Generalized Anxiety Disorder* (GAD; Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, & Lowe, 2006): The 7-item GAD scale was used to assess generalized anxiety disorder (e.g., "feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge"). Responses were scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (No days in the past 7 days) to 3 (5–7 days in the past 7 days), with higher scores indicating higher levels of GAD.

*Rumination Scale* (RS; Trapnell & Campbell, 1999): The Rumination subscale of the Rumination and Reflection Questionnaire was included in this study. The Rumination Scale assesses the tendency of ruminative negative thinking (e.g., "My attention is often focused on aspects of myself I wish

I'd stop thinking about"). Participants of Sample A completed the 8-item scale. Responses were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from −3 (Strongly disagree) to 3 (Strongly agree), with higher scores indicating more ruminative thinking.

*Psychological Well-Being Scale* (PWB; Ryff, 1989): This 18-item scale has six subscales, including autonomy (e.g., "I have confidence in my own opinion, even if they are different from the way most people think"), self-acceptance (e.g., "I like most parts of my personality"), personal growth (e.g., "For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth"), environmental mastery ("The demands of everyday life get me down," reverse-coded), positive relations with others ("I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others," reverse-coded), and purpose in life ("Some people wander aimlessly through life, I am not one of them"). Responses were scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from −3 (Strongly disagree) to 3 (Strongly agree) with higher scores indicating higher psychological well-being.

*Mindful Attention Awareness Scale* (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003): Participants of Sample A completed the 15-item MAAS, which assesses mindfulness (e.g., "I rush through activities without being really attentive to them," reverse-coded). Responses were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Almost never) to 5 (Almost always), with higher scores indicating higher mindfulness.

*Self-Compassion Scale* (SCS; Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011): This 12-item scale assesses six dimensions of self-compassion: self-kindness, common humanity, mindfulness, over-identification, isolation, and self-judgment (e.g., "I try to see my failings as part of the human condition"). Responses were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Almost never) to 5 (Almost always), with higher scores indicating higher self-compassion.

*Difficulties in Eotion Regulation Scale* (DERS; Gratz & Roemer, 2004): Several DERS subscales were used here: difficulties in fulfilling one's goals, impulsiveness, limited access to emotion regulation, lack of emotional awareness, and lack of emotional clarity ("I experience my emotions as overwhelming and out of control"). To shorten the length of the survey, we selected 9 items from the original 36 items. Responses were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Almost never) to 5 (Almost always). The responses were coded with higher scores indicating more difficulties in emotion regulation.

The validity and reliability of these scales were well-established in the literature. The Cronbach's α coefficients for these scales calculated with Sample A were within the range of 0.76 and 0.91.

## Results and Discussion

The zero-order correlations of the summary score of the nine-item IPS with related scales are reported in Table 15.4. On one hand, IPS scores were strongly and negatively correlated with symptoms of mental disorders such as depressive symptoms ($r = -0.51$), anxiety ($r = -0.56$), rumination ($r = -0.58$), and difficulties in emotion regulation ($r = -0.55$). On the other hand, IPS scores were positively associated with psychological well-being ($r = 0.35$), self-compassion ($r = 0.056$), and mindfulness ($r = 0.32$).

Following the analytic-synthetic approach suggested by Mulaik and Millsap (2000), we utilized both EFA and CFA to further investigate the correlation of each dimension of IPS with dimensions of each of the above-mentioned mental health and well-being constructs, with factor-specific correlations reported in Table 15.5. In the analytic step, we started with EFA for each scale separately, which suggested the number of factors and factor-item structures emerged from our data. Although these mental health and well-being scales are well-established, we started with EFA because there is often no clear boundary between the confirmative and exploratory aspects of CFA when a new setting or a new sample is under consideration (Anderson

**Table 15.4** Zero-order correlations among scale summary scores (Sample A)

|  | IPS | Cronbach's α |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Inner Peace Scale (IPS) | — | 0.73 |
| Psychological well-being | 0.35*** | 0.83 |
| Mindfulness | 0.32*** | 0.88 |
| Self-compassion | 0.56*** | 0.77 |
| CES–D | −0.51*** | 0.91 |
| Generalized anxiety disorder | −0.56*** | 0.91 |
| Difficulties in emotion regulation | −0.55*** | 0.76 |
| Rumination | −0.58*** | 0.86 |

*** $p < 0.001$.

**Table 15.5** Correlations among latent factors of IPS and other related constructs[a] (Sample A, $n = 557$)

| | Acceptance of loss | Transcending hedonism and materialism | Inner balance and calmness |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Psychological Well-Being (PWB)** | | | |
| WB1– Environmental mastery | 0.27*** | 0.07 | 0.42*** |
| WB2– Autonomy | 0.20*** | −0.05 | 0.28*** |
| WB3– Positive relations | 0.51*** | 0.22*** | 0.30*** |
| WB4– Self-acceptance | 0.57*** | 0.14* | 0.52*** |
| WB5– Personal growth | 0.06 | −0.17** | 0.15** |
| WB6– Less sense of stagnation | 0.42*** | 0.09 | 0.13* |
| **Mindfulness (MAAS)** | | | |
| Less autopiloting | 0.35*** | 0.29*** | 0.16** |
| Awareness of the present | 0.50*** | 0.23*** | 0.32*** |
| Awareness of emotion | 0.21*** | 0.03 | 0.02 |
| **Self-Compassion (SCS)** | | | |
| Self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness | 0.58*** | 0.33*** | 0.41*** |
| Less overidentification, isolation, and self-judgment | 0.29*** | 0.03 | 0.48*** |
| **Depressive Symptoms (CES–D)** | | | |
| Depressive moods | −0.61*** | −0.20*** | −0.50*** |
| Lack of well-being | −0.46*** | −0.08 | −0.42*** |
| Negative relations | −0.53*** | −0.13* | −0.35*** |
| **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GADS)** | | | |
| Generalized anxiety | −0.61*** | −0.27*** | −0.54*** |
| **Difficulties in Emotion Regulation (DERS)** | | | |
| Lack of emotion awareness and clarity | −0.23*** | −0.01 | −0.34*** |
| Limited access to emotion regulation | −0.68*** | −0.24*** | −0.48*** |
| **Rumination Scale (RS)** | | | |
| Rumination | −0.65*** | −0.34*** | −0.49*** |

[a] Results from a set of standardized CFA conducted with sample A.

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

& Gerbing, 1988). Results from EFA can inform us in model modification in CFA. In CFA, the theoretical latent structure of each of the instruments was first examined by evaluating how well the documented theoretical model fitted the data. Modifications were then made to improve fit based on information from EFA and the results from analyzing the standardized residual matrix and the Lagrange multiplier tests generated in CFA. Items with high uniqueness in EFA or with a standardized loading of less than 0.45 were deleted.

Theoretical factor structures of most scales were confirmed in these factor analyses. There were a few situations in which our factor analysis based on Sample A suggested modification. For example, the dimension of purpose of life of the PWB scale was not found in the student sample. Instead we found a factor that could be better labeled as a "sense of stagnation." The self-compassion scale displayed a two-factor structure in our analysis, with one factor manifested in all the positively termed items covering the self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness dimensions and the other manifested in all the reverse-coded items covering over-identification, isolation, and self-judgment dimensions.

After finalizing the CFA for each mental health and well-being scale, we took the synthetic step, in which the nine IPS items were added to each of the CFA models for correlations (standardized covariances) among latent factors. All models that generated these correlations had adequate fit. All CFI were greater than 0.94, and TLI was greater than 0.92. All RMSEA were smaller than 0.06 and the upper limit of their 90% CI were lower than 0.07. Although all $\chi^2$ were significant, all $\chi^2/df$ were smaller than 3. Correlations estimated from these CFA were consistent with the theoretical expectations and most of them were statistically significant. Specifically, the "Acceptance of loss" had a correlation coefficient greater than 0.5 with the following constructs: positive relations (in PWB), self-acceptance (in PWB), awareness of the present (in Mindfulness), and self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (in Self-Compassion). "Acceptance of loss" also had a strong negative correlation with depressive mood (in CES-D), negative relations (in CES-D), anxiety (GADS), rumination (RS), and limited access to emotion regulation (in DERS). Similarly, the correlations of "Inner balance and calmness" with the following constructs were quite strong: self-acceptance (in PWB), rumination (in RS), depressive moods (in CES-D), and anxiety (in GADS). The correlations of "Transcending hedonism and materialism" with these constructs were relatively small, but most of them were in the expected

direction and statistically significant. Nevertheless, the two correlation analyses provided sufficient evidence for the construct validity of the IPS.

## Study 4: Known Groups Analysis

A *known groups analysis* compares a measurement between a group of individuals known to have a certain characteristics or traits that are related to the measurement and a group without such traits. If the measurement can successfully discriminate between the two groups, the construct validity of the measurement is supported (Portney & Watkins, 2008). In this study, we extended the known groups analysis to the comparisons between groups with and without certain behaviors or experiences. As suggested by many sages in both Western and Eastern cultures, contemplative practices lead to inner peace. Prayer has been considered in different religions to be the most important practice for experiencing divine love and achieving inner peace (Lee, Poloma, et al., 2013). In many eastern traditions, such as Buddhism and Hinduism, meditation is central in the practice for liberating oneself from suffering and inner struggles (Cordaro et al., 2016; Hart, 1987). We expected that those who meditate or pray often would enjoy higher levels of inner peace. We also expect that groups that have gone through formal meditation training would report higher levels of inner peace compared to similar groups who have not received such training.

## Methods

### Participants and Procedures

Participants in Sample A were asked whether or not they meditate or pray and how often if they did. Of the 551 students who provided information on this question, 169 prayed/meditated frequently or almost daily or more; 245 students either never prayed/meditated or did very little. We compared these two groups on their IPS scores to evaluate the known-group validity of the scale.

In the fall semester of 2018, at a large, Midwestern US university, 98 college students (Sample C) participated in the same randomized trial as did the participants in Sample B. They were in the experimental group who received a 6-week mindfulness meditation training. All participants received cash

rewards. The original study included the IPS in two online surveys: one took place before the intervention and one right after the 6-week intervention for both the experimental group (Sample C) and the control group (Sample B). Of the 98 students, 81 completed the training and participated in both surveys. As reported in Table 15.1, Sample C was composed of 57 females (70.4%) and 24 males (29.6%), with a mean age of 21 ($SD = 4.8$). More than two-thirds of the sample were white (69.2%), about 16.5% were black, and 97.5% were non-Hispanic. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents were self-identified as Christian, 17.3% self-identified as Catholic, 12.3% as other religions, and 39.5% considered themselves as without a specific religion or as nonreligious.

*Measures.* For sample A, all nine items of the IPS were included in the analysis. For Samples B and C, only eight of the nine IPS items were included in their two surveys. The omitted item was "I maintain a balanced mind when bad things happen to me."

## Results and Discussion

In Sample A, comparing IPS scores between those who prayed or meditated regularly (mean = 24.72, $SD = 5.63$, $n = 159$) and those who never or seldom prayed/meditated (mean = 23.4, $SD = 5.77$, $n = 206$), the regular prayers/meditators reported a slightly higher mean score on IPS ($p = 0.02$; two-tailed t-test; Cohen's $d = 0.23$).

For participants who have gone through the 6-week meditation training (Sample C), the average IPS score elevated substantially (mean$_{before}$ = 20.05, $SD_{before}$ = 4.75; mean$_{after}$ = 23.93, $SD_{after}$ = 4.72; diff = 3.88, standard error [$SE$] = 0.46, $p < 0.000$; two-tailed t test). The effect size given by Cohen's $d$ was 0.63, indicating the elevation in IPS was almost two-thirds of a standard deviation. Itemized analyses indicated that the greatest elevations were found among items for "Inner balance and calmness," with increases of about 1 standard deviation on both items. Elevations for the items for "Acceptance of loss" were also notable. However, the changes on items for "Transcending hedonism and materialism" were small and not statistically significant. For the control group (Sample B), comparing the IPS scores before and after the same 6-week interval, the average IPS score remained the same (mean$_{before}$ = 20.43, $SD_{before}$ = 5.77; mean$_{after}$ = 20.39, $SD_{after}$ = 5.31; diff = −0.04, $SE = 0.60$, $p = 0.90$ two-tailed t test). Item-specific analysis indicated that

none of the items displayed noticeable changes after 6 weeks. The difference in difference (DID) of the summary IPS scores between the two groups was quite large (DID = 3.92, $p < 0.000$; Cohen's $d = 0.96$), with the change score for the group that had the 6-week meditation training being almost 1 standard deviation higher than that for the control group. The preceding results from known groups analyses rendered further support for the construct validity of the IPS.

## Study 5: Cross-Culture Comparison

Although inner peace is considered a positive mental state in many cultures, not all cultures have inner peace as one of their "ideal affects," defined as how people want to feel or what the most desired feelings are (Lee, Lin, Huang, & Frederickson, 2013; Lu & Gilmour, 2004; Tsai et al., 2006). Researchers have argued that Western cultures generally prefer hedonic happiness, while Eastern cultures are more likely to pay attention to peace, contentment, and harmony (Lu, 2001). In a study involving Chinese and American undergraduate students, researchers found that Chinese students reported higher levels of peace of mind than did American students (Lee, Lin, et al., 2013). In contrast, members of American and European cultures emphasize more high-arousal emotions such as excited, elated, etc. (Tsai et al., 2006). In this study, we expect that individuals raised in the Chinese culture would score higher on the IPS due to the cultural preference for peace, contentment, and harmony (Cordaro et al., 2016; Lee, Lin, et al., 2013). Because the US culture prefers high-arousal emotions, we expect members of US culture to have lower levels of acceptance of loss and transcendence of hedonism and materialism.

## Methods

Participants and Procedures
In March 2019, 106 Chinese undergraduate and graduate students from a major university located in Central China (Sample D) participated in a short online survey containing the Chinese version of the nine-item IPS on the Survey Monkey platform. We were allowed access to de-identified data for this sample. The mean age was 22.84 years ($SD = 2.35$) and 75.47% of the

sample was female. Due to the fact that religious beliefs and practices sometimes are politically sensitive in China, no information on faith background was collected. Sample A was also used in this study so that cross-culture comparison could be conducted. There were 31 students in Sample A who identified themselves as Asian without further differentiations in cultural origins. We deleted the 31 students from the analysis. Summary scores on IPS were created for both samples and compared against each other. Multigroup CFA was used to evaluate the measurement invariance of the IPS across two samples with different cultural backgrounds.

## Results and Discussion

Difference in the average levels of the overall IPS for the Chinese and US samples was first evaluated. Because the Chinese sample had more females and was 2 years older on average, we controlled for gender and age in the comparison. After controlling for age and gender, the Chinese sample had an average IPS summary score about 1.68 points higher than that of the US sample ($p < 0.01$ Cohen's $d = 0.32$).

We followed the same strategy for MGCFA described in Study 1. The unconstrained model allowing all parameters for the two groups to vary fitted the data well ($\chi^2$ [48] = 97.98, $p < 0.001$; $\chi^2$/df = 2.04; CFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.94; RSMEA = 0.06 with 90% CI [0.04, 0.07]; SRMR = 0.06). Further MGCFA indicated that there was not enough evidence to reject measurement invariance across the two samples. But the model allowing for different factor means across samples fitted the data significantly better than the one that didn't allow it. Closer examination indicated that the US sample had a lower mean on all three factors, but only the differences in the means for "Acceptance of loss" (effect size = −0.30; Acock, 2013) and "Transcending hedonism and materialism" (effect size = −0.45; Acock, 2013) were statistically significant. The effect size of the difference in "Transcending hedonism and materialism" signaled a substantial gap as the mean score on this factor for the US sample was almost half of a standard deviation lower than that of the Chinese sample. Further examinations on group difference in factor variances indicated that the variance of the factor "Transcending hedonism and materialism" for the US sample was more than double the size of that for the Chinese sample. The variance of the factor "Inner balance and calmness" for the US sample was also significantly higher. These results were consistent with our expectations

and reflected cultural differences between the two groups; specifically, that US culture is more hedonistic and materialistic in general but also more diverse with respect to cultural values. Cross-culture comparison provided further support for construct validity of the IPS.

## General Discussion and Conclusion

Although inner peace is frequently mentioned in philosophical and theological literature and in everyday life (a Google search produced more than 205 million results for "inner peace"), research on this multidimensional construct in the social sciences is lacking. Occasionally a single-item measure is used (Liu et al., 2015), or inner peace is integrated into a more general framework that incorporates material needs and group cohesion (Zucker et al., 2014). As a result, there are not many discussions on how we should conceptualize and measure this fundamental dimension of well-being of human life. Drawing on cross-cultural insights from philosophy, theology, and the social sciences, we developed a nine-item, three-dimensional instrument to measure inner peace, which we called the IPS. The dimensions included acceptance of loss, transcendence of hedonism and materialism, and inner balance and calmness. Our five empirical studies provided an initial psychometric evaluation of the new scale. The results from the five studies indicated good validity and reliability of IPS. The short length of the scale allows easy incorporation into standardized surveys.

To situate the IPS in the literature concerning positive human experiences and well-being, in Table 15.6, we juxtapose measures for closely related concepts documented in the literature so that the distinctive features of the IPS proposed in this study can be better seen.

The existing research literature regarding concepts related to peaceful mental states frequently conceive of them either as a subdomain of spirituality or an advanced spiritual experience. The measures listed in Table 15.6 generally reflect this conceptualization. An example for the former is the Serenity Scale developed as part of the measurement for spirituality (Kreitzer et al., 2009; Roberts & Aspy, 1993); the latter is exemplified by the "being at peace" portion of the Enlightenment Scale (Boyd-Wilson & Walkey, 2015). When it is not considered as part of the domain of spirituality, inner peace is often considered as an outcome of religious involvement (Ellison, Burdette, & Hill, 2009). This conceptualization and operationalization limit the

application of these instruments when spirituality is not the major research consideration or with nonreligious groups. Boyd-Wilson and Walkey's measure mixed many other related concepts such as wholeness, being in the present moment, self-esteem, etc., due to the fact that the scale was developed to measure enlightenment. Wholeness, self-esteem, and well-being may be features of enlightenment. But there is room for debate whether or not many of the items are measuring peace per se.

Researchers in the field of positive psychology have recently started to study peaceful mental states such as tranquility and contentment as positive low-arousal affects (Berenbaum et al., 2018). Their definition for tranquility has a focus on acceptance, which is similar to one of the three dimensions in the IPS. Lee, Lin, et al.'s (2013) study treated peace of mind as a general mental state of peacefulness and harmony. Measures used in these studies tap mental states such as contentment, being at ease, and the feeling of harmony, which are related but still distinct from inner peace.

Comparing IPS and the five scales in Table 15.6 reveals some similarities. The feeling of peace found in all scales in Table 15.6 was included in IPS and labeled as "Inner balance and calmness." Similar to Boyd-Wilson and Walkey's and Kreitzer et al.'s scale, IPS also had a dimension of acceptance. Further examining the items on acceptance in Table 15.6, it was clear that the focus in these studies was on acceptance of undesirable and uncontrollable life events or situations. (e.g., "I accept things as they are rather than wish helplessly that they were better"; "I accept situations that I cannot change"). This was consistent with the "Acceptance of loss" factor in IPS. The major difference between IPS and the scales in Table 15.6 is found in the dimension of "Transcending hedonism and materialism," as well as excluding aspects that are not specifically related to inner peace (e.g., self-esteem).

Our conceptualization of inner peace focused on a balanced mind that is characterized by the absence of both self-imposed negative mental states triggered by undesirable life situations and heightened positive mental states due to hedonism and material gratification. The latter was discussed in some of the above-mentioned studies but they did not directly measure it (Boyd-Wilson & Walkey, 2015). A life pursuing hedonism by grasping external things such as possessions, positions, reputations, knowledge, etc. might make people happy in the short run, but they may not bring peace because of the transitory nature of life circumstances (Singer, 2007). Hedonistic lifestyles expressed through consumerism, which is spreading globally, are also not environmentally sustainable, suggesting a possible connection

between inner peace and ecological well-being (Mayell, 2004). Hedonism, when it is associated with clinging to positive feelings, has been considered an aspect of complex defense mechanisms originating from lack of security, balance, and peace (Horney, 1950). The pursuit of positive thinking or feeling may involve inherent problems (Harris, 2008). According to this perspective, peace as a mental state necessitates the transcending of hedonism and materialism. A measurement for inner peace should intentionally measure this dimension. None of the scales in Table 15.6 tapped this dimension, which is therefore a *unique contribution* of the IPS. A global survey revealed that most people understand happiness in terms of inner harmony and peaceful relationships with others (Delle Fave et al., 2016), both of which are diminished by the selfish and unsustainable patterns of material acquisition fostered by a conceptualization of well-being that does not include peace as a core component.

The *transcending of hedonism and materialism* aspect of our conceptualization may be especially important for the development of *maturity* (moving beyond a state of being "dominated by impulses," especially hedonistic ones), which has been shown to change the "meaning and experience of happiness" (King, 2001, pp. 51, 56). Whereas an immature happiness rooted in positive affect might be the result of *avoiding* deep reflection on loss and regret, a strong foundation of inner peace may facilitate the successful *accommodation* of such losses into the development of a more mature personality (King, 2001) and a more contemplative way of living that fosters greater well-being for self and other (Baugher, 2019). This mature and thorough engagement with life on life's terms—including its negative aspects—is the way of complementarity (Bateson, 1971) and should be associated with a giving (meaningful) rather than taking (happy) orientation toward life (Baumeister et al., 2013), and with finding the true peace in the true good rather than the apparent peace in the apparent good (Aquinas, 1920).

The proposed IPS and its evaluation are not without limitations. First, samples used in the five studies were mainly college students. As suggested by the developmental view of human life, people grow from their life experiences. Therefore, older adults could have learned more about how to find and maintain inner balance from their richer life experiences and thus enjoy more inner peace than young adults. Although this is only a speculation, researchers have suggested that older people have more composure and more skills in dealing with life (Mirowsky & Ross, 1992). Future research should use samples, such as community adults, with a wider age distribution

**Table 15.6** Measures for concepts similar to inner peace

| Authors | Concept | Definition | Scale name | Scale features | Items |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boyd-Wilson &Walkey (2015) | Being at peace as part of enlightenment | No definition is given. The concept is considered as contained in the parent concept enlightenment, which is defined as "an ordinary way of being that once established means that an individual is authentic, compassionate, and at peace." | Being at Peace | 15-item 5-point scale as a subscale of the Enlighten-ment Scale | 1. In the "core" of me I'm content no matter what.<br>2. My life runs smoothly, even though challenges that arise.<br>3. Life isn't a big struggle anymore though it can be tough sometimes.<br>4. I have a sense of well-being.<br>5. Overall, things for me get better and better.<br>6. I trust my future.<br>7. I accept things as they are rather than wish helplessly that they were better.<br>8. Things for me have a basically peaceful feel to them.<br>9. My problems aren't problems now; they're just things I deal with in the normal flow of events.<br>10. I don't need to do or be or have anything more in order to feel whole. I feel whole now.<br>11. I don't get depressed and think I'm worthless.<br>12. I feel whole whether alone or with others.<br>13. I feel "centered in myself" even when interacting with others or doing something.<br>14. I understand who I am.<br>15. I don't feel that life has dished me out a bad deal. |

Kreitzer et al. (2009) | Serenity | "A spiritual state that decreases stress and promotes optimal health, a sustained state of inner peace." | Brief Serenity Scale | 22-item 5-point scale

Factor 1: Acceptance
1. I am forgiving of myself for past mistakes.
2. I take care of today and let yesterday and tomorrow take care of themselves.
3. In problem situations, I do what I am able to do and then accept whatever.
4. I accept situations that I can not change.
5. I try to place my problems in the proper perspective in any given situation.
6. I find ways to share my talents with others.
7. I attempt to deal with what is, rather than what was or what will be.
8. I feel that I have done the best I could in life.
9. I feel forgiving of those who have harmed me.
10. I feel serene.

Factor 2: Inner Haven
11. I am aware of an inner source of comfort.
12. During troubled time, I experience an inner source of strength.
13. I experience peace of mind.
14. I am aware of inner peace.
15. I experience an inner quiet that does not depend on events.
16. When I get upset, I become peaceful by getting in touch with my inner self.
17. I experience an inner calm even when I am under pressure.
18. I can feel angry and observe my feeling of anger and separate myself from it and still feel an inner peace.

(*continued*)

**Table 15.6** *Continued*

| Authors | Concept | Definition | Scale name | Scale features | Items |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Factor 3: Trust<br>19. I trust that life events happen to fit a plan which is larger and more gentle than I can know.<br>20. I see the good in painful events that have happened to me.<br>21. Even though I do not understand, I trust in the ultimate goodness of the plan of things.<br>22. I trust that everything happens as it should. |
| Lee et al. (2013) | Peace of mind | "An internal state of peacefulness and harmony." | the Peace of Mind Scale | 7-item 5-point Likert-type scale | 1. My Mind is free and at ease.<br>2. I feel content and comfortable with myself in daily life.<br>3. My lifestyle gives me feelings of peace and stability.<br>4. I have peace and harmony in my mind.<br>5. it is difficult for me to feel settled. (Reverse).<br>6. The way I live brings me feelings of peace and comfort.<br>7. I feel anxious and uneasy in my mind (Reverse). |
| Berenbaum et al. (2018) | Tranquility | "One is at peace with one's current status, regardless of goal attainment." | Tranquility | 3-item 5-point index | How much do you generally experience:<br>(1) calm?<br>(2) serene?<br>(3) tranquil? |
| Ellison et al. (2009) | Tranquility | No definition is given in the study. The concept is used as a positive mental state as oppose to anxiety. | Tranquility | 3-item 7-point index | How many of the last 7 days have you:<br>(1) felt at ease?<br>(2) felt content?<br>(3) felt calm? |

than college students. Second, we used convenience sampling, which limited the generalizability of the study's findings. For example, the cross-culture comparison would have been more informative if samples for both cultures were nationally representative.

We have already begun the process of developing better wording for our existing items or creating new items that better capture our three dimensions of inner peace. The multidisciplinary team at Harvard's Human Flourishing Program providing the following helpful suggestions, which demonstrate to us the value of engaging scholars from outside of our own discipline (sociology) to include such humanities as philosophy and theology. Some of our items focus on "mind" rather than "soul," or simply a sense of "I." Specific language will resonate with different groups: the notion of a "balanced mind" may not have a clear meaning with some populations. Others might prefer an item such as "I feel a profound sense of peace in my soul" or simply "I feel a profound sense of peace." Our items for transcending hedonism and materialism certainly need work, at least for Western audiences. A better wording suggested by colleagues is: "When things go wrong, I try to bury my sorrow in pleasure." The connection between this item and the domain seems quite direct, although social desirability may encourage a negative response. Another suggestion is about the term "positive situation" used in our items, which captures situations broader than hedonism and materialism because a positive situation could refer to any positive psychological states, such as a sense of being with God or even a state of inner peace. It would be better to make the item more specific. Such suggestions will have to undergo empirical validation, but, in the meantime, we affirm the value of multidisciplinary dialog.

The main purpose of this chapter was to introduce the IPS as a new measure for inner peace which contains "transcending hedonism and materialism"—an important dimension of the concept which is neglected in previous scales. Of course, this is just a start in our effort to conceptualize and measure inner peace for empirical research. The human experience of peace is rich and diverse. People have different levels of inner peace, experience it at different depths, move in or out of the state of inner peace, and transition from periodic states of inner peace to more constantly live in peace. Future studies should differentiate theoretically and empirically different levels and depths of inner peace, as well as different stages of dynamic processes of inner peace. Such research should also focus on mechanisms that contribute to or are detrimental to inner peace. For example, previous

studies have found that a sensation-seeking tendency is linked to the desire for high-arousal emotions and experiences like happiness, excitement, and physical pleasure (Oishi, Schimmack, & Diener, 2001; Smith, Davison, Smith, Goldstein, & Perlstein, 1989; Zuckerman, 2015). How does this tendency relate to inner peace in general and its three dimensions in particular, especially the dimension of transcending of hedonism and materialism? Can the sensation-seeking tendency explain cross-cultural difference in the IPS? If inner peace, as we have defined it, is an engaged mental balance that can be learned and achieved, what are the strategies that one can take to cultivate this mental state?

In answering such questions, future research might find it helpful to connect inner and outer peace. In some Eastern traditions, for example, the notion of *karma* suggests that even if a person's mental state is currently peaceful, the harmful effects of their past deeds (and the deeds of others) may continue to cause disturbances that may unsettle their mental state long into the future. And although contemporary discussions sometimes portray inner peace as a form of escapism—retreating from the difficulties in the world into an experience of artificial bliss within a mental fortress—this is unlikely to contribute to healthy and sustainable forms of well-being for individuals or communities. As the ancient Greeks put it, a peaceful "ordering of the soul" required that "such goods as friendship, pleasure, virtue, honor and wealth fit together as a whole" within an ideal "political order" (Kraut, 2018, n.p.). Similarly, in the fifth century AD Augustine's *City of God* developed the ideal of the *Tranquillitas Ordinis* (the tranquility of order) to connect the inner experience of peace with an external harmony found in the right ordering of all things. One does not need to be a follower of Augustine to appreciate the ill effects on inner peace that flow from high levels of conflict, injustice, and discord in the wider world. From this perspective, outer peace is a collective experience that arises from the right ordering of all things in the world, which would entail justice and healthy relationships. For Augustine, this would include right relationships of self to other people and to God, whereas the nonreligious might refer instead to right relationships to people and the natural environment.

Exploitative relationships are obviously contrary to both inner and outer peace. This is why we previously mentioned the peace-builder who seeks to create external conditions that foster peace. While working for peace, a peace-builder might hold peaceful beliefs and engage in practices that

foster the state of inner peace. But this individual's state of inner peace will ultimately be incomplete unless there is a correspondingly high degree of right ordering in the world. For Augustine, complete inner peace in this world is not attainable. But it is always possible to cultivate the state of inner peace to some degree, just as it is possible to cultivate a trait of peacefulness.

Furthermore, we might imagine that a person who is *flourishing*, in the sense of having high levels of such well-being domains as happiness and life satisfaction, emotional and physical health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, and satisfying social relationships (VanderWeele, 2017), would flourish even more if they also skillfully cultivated a state of inner peace *and* engaged in peace-building activities that more rightly ordered the world. If I am doing meaningful work in the world, but I am often agitated, or if I am happy but oblivious to injustice experienced by others, I am not fully flourishing. Inner peace and outer peace are both (at least partly) constitutive of full flourishing because my sense of wholeness requires a right ordering of both the self and the world. If I am out of balance in a psychological sense, I might produce great art for legions of adoring fans or engage in heroic actions as a first-responder in a manner that garners much public commendation, but my *complete* well-being will be limited. Likewise, if the world is out of balance—riven with injustice, polluted so that life-sustaining ecosystems are in decline—my own ability to thrive is necessarily compromised.

We recognize that "right ordering" is a highly contested term, and the point of our chapter is not primarily to explain the relationships between inner and outer peace. Nor have we attempted to advance a particularistic viewpoint of the meaning of peace. But we believe that it is necessary to begin to develop a framework that connects inner peace with engagement with the outer world (see also Delle Fave et al., 2016). In the final analysis, tradition-specific measures of inner peace may be needed in order to do justice to the distinct moral ecologies (Hunter & Olson, 2018) that give particularistic meaning to the term. We hope that our new measure of inner peace contributes to this broader project of linking inner and outer peace and situating the research within different moral ecologies. Although complete peace may remain elusive in a conflicted world, inner and outer peace surely make important contributions to the fullest possible experience of flourishing.

## About the Authors

**Juan Xi** is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Akron and is author and co-author of more than 30 research articles and book chapters. Her recent research examines the impact of mindfulness meditation through a mindful approach to integrate qualitative and quantitative methods.

**Matthew T. Lee** is Director of Empirical Research at the Human Flourishing Program in the Institute for Quantitative Social Science at Harvard University and coauthor of *The Heart of Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2013). He is also a Distinguished Visiting Scholar of Health, Flourishing, and Positive Psychology at Stony Brook University's Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and, and he previously served as Chair of the American Sociological Association's Section on Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity. His research explores pathways to human flourishing, benevolent service to others, and the integration of social science and the humanities.

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