

Development and Testing Theoretical Models of the Religion-Health Connection

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Overview

- Religion-health connection
- Mechanisms/mediators
- Role of qualitative foundations
- Testing theoretical models
- Implications

Religion-Health Connection

- Religious involvement is often found to be positively associated with health
 - Cognitions
 - Behaviors
 - Outcomes
- However some studies find negative associations
- Or no association at all

Why the connection?

- Mechanisms of the religion-health connection (mediators of the effect)

Proposed Mechanisms

Intrapersonal factors:

- Positive affect
- Coping with stress
- Positive self-perceptions

Proposed Mechanisms

Interpersonal factors:

- Social support
- Social influence/social norms
- Spiritual capital
 - Based on social capital
 - Involves relationships with faith community and those with higher power
 - Need to distinguish construct from soc. support

Proposed Mechanisms

Faith-based factors:

- Scriptural influence on health behavior (health lifestyle)*
- Illness as punishment/guilt*
- Sense of meaning
- Spiritual health locus of control

*Developed instruments to assess (Holt, C.L., Clark, E.M., Roth, D.L., Crowther, M., Cohler, C., Fouad, M., Foushee, R., Lee, P.A., & Southward, P.L. (In Press, Journal of Black Psychology).

Qualitative Foundations

- In-depth semi-structured interviews with African Americans from 7 midwestern churches
- Questions about things that impact health and role of religion in health and illness
- Data analyzed using open coding method

Qualitative Foundations

Religion-health mechanisms identified:

- Spiritual health locus of control
- Coping (health and non-health)
- Positive affect/mental health
- Healthy lifestyle
- Sense of meaning
- Social support

Qualitative Foundations

Religion-health mechanisms identified:

- Participants did not feel that religion played negative role in health

Qualitative Foundations

Additional themes identified (things we were not looking for but found anyway):

- Mental health impacts physical health
- Support received from church family
- Body as a temple
- Sickness as a message
- Walkign the talk

Qualitative Foundations

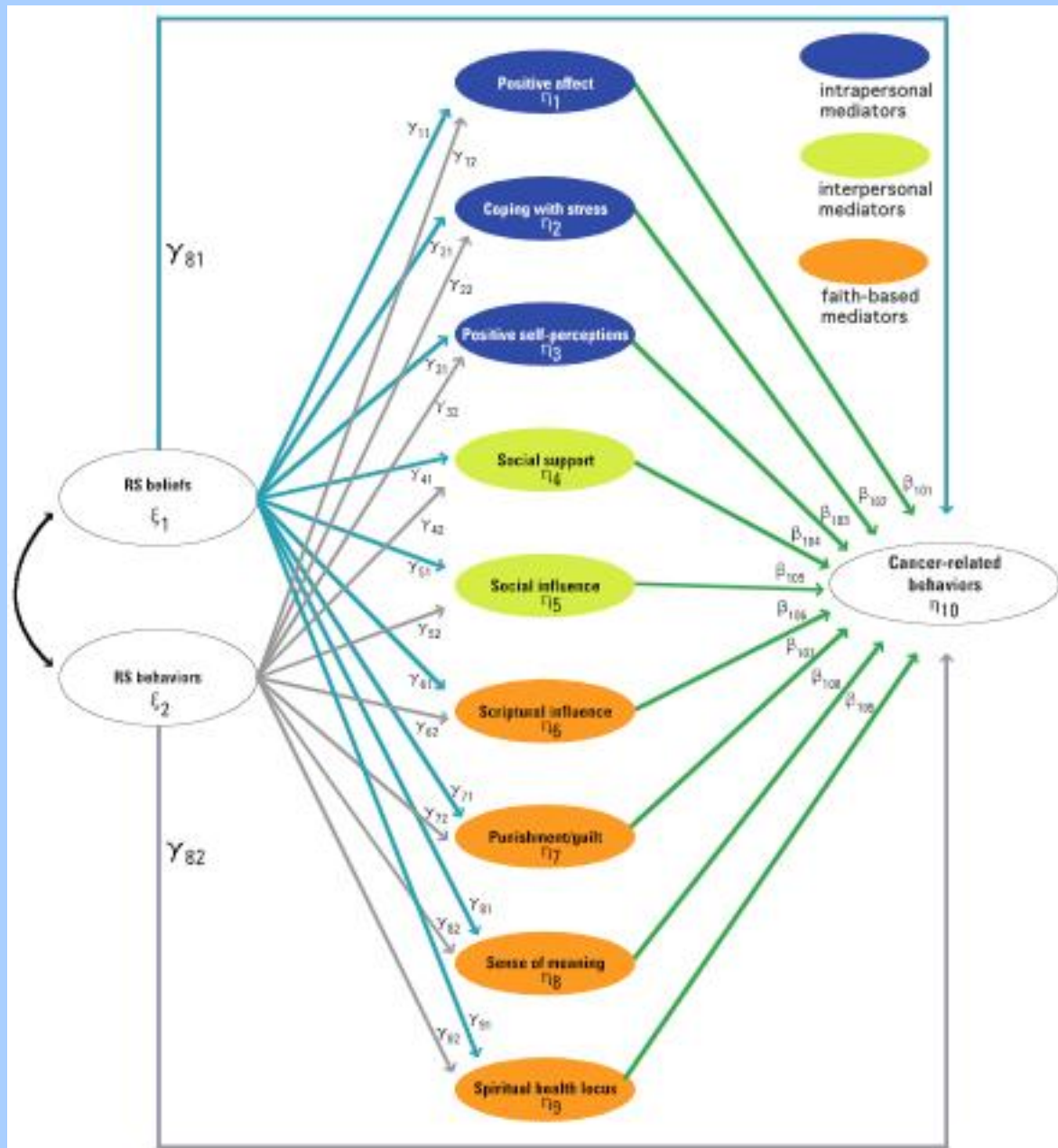
Additional themes identified (things we were not looking for but found anyway):

- Religion brings inner peace
- Giving problems up to God
- Spiritual health
- Worry and stress lead to health problems
- Faith gives hope
- Body, mind, & spirit

Holt, C.L., McClure, S. (2006). Perceptions of the religion-health connection among African American church members. Qualitative Health Research, 16, 268-281.

Theory Development

- Qualitative findings and literature used to develop theoretical model of religion-health connection



Theory Testing

- Probability-based sample of 2,500 African Americans age 21 and older who have not had cancer
- 45-minute telephone interview
- Currently underway

Cancer Coping Study

- Aim: to understand the role, if any, of religious involvement and spirituality in coping with a cancer diagnosis
 - Phase 1: qualitative, semi-structured interviews with 30 patients
 - Phase 2: quantitative, structured telephone interviews with 100 patients

Qualitative Foundations

Major themes:

- God helps one through cancer
- God works as a healer, directly and/or through doctors
- Role of faith/belief in healing
- Prayer

Holt, C.L., Caplan, L., Schulz, E., Blake, V., Southward, P., Buckner, A., & Lawrence, H. (In Press). Role of religion in cancer coping among African Americans: A qualitative examination. Journal of Psychosocial Oncology.

Qualitative Foundations

Major themes:

- Affective response
- Social support
- Control beliefs
- Meaning-making

Holt, C.L., Caplan, L., Schulz, E., Blake, V., Southward, P., Buckner, A., & Lawrence, H. (In Press). Role of religion in cancer coping among African Americans: A qualitative examination. Journal of Psychosocial Oncology.

Qualitative Foundations

Major themes - spirituality:

- Connections with God (relationship with, relying on, seeking his presence)
- Connections with Others (family members, friends, church family, other patients, treatment team)

Schulz, E., Holt, C.L., Caplan, L., Blake, V., Southward, P., Buckner, A., & Lawrence, H. (2008). Role of spirituality in cancer coping among African Americans: A qualitative examination. Journal of Cancer Survivorship,2, 104-115.

Qualitative Foundations

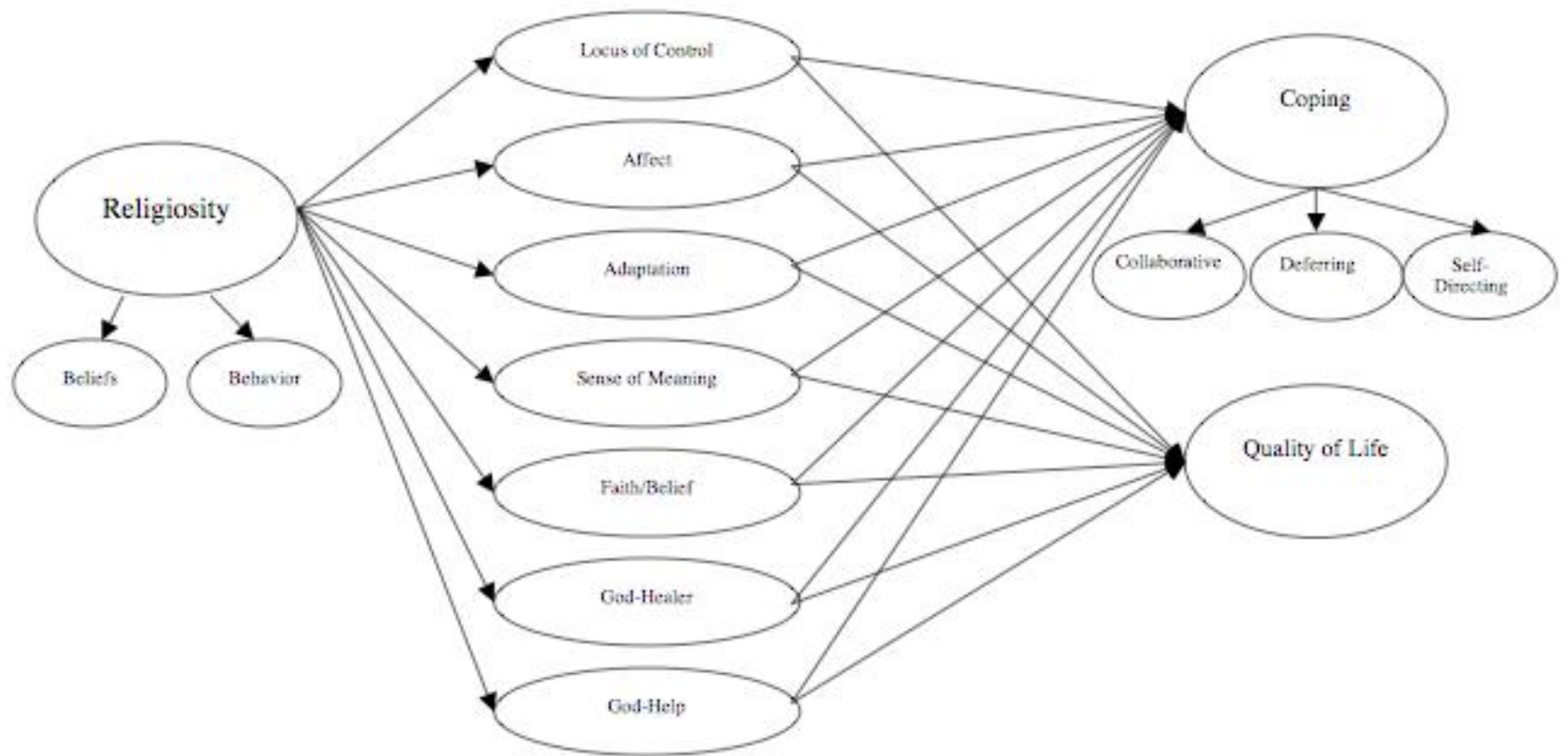
Major themes - spirituality:

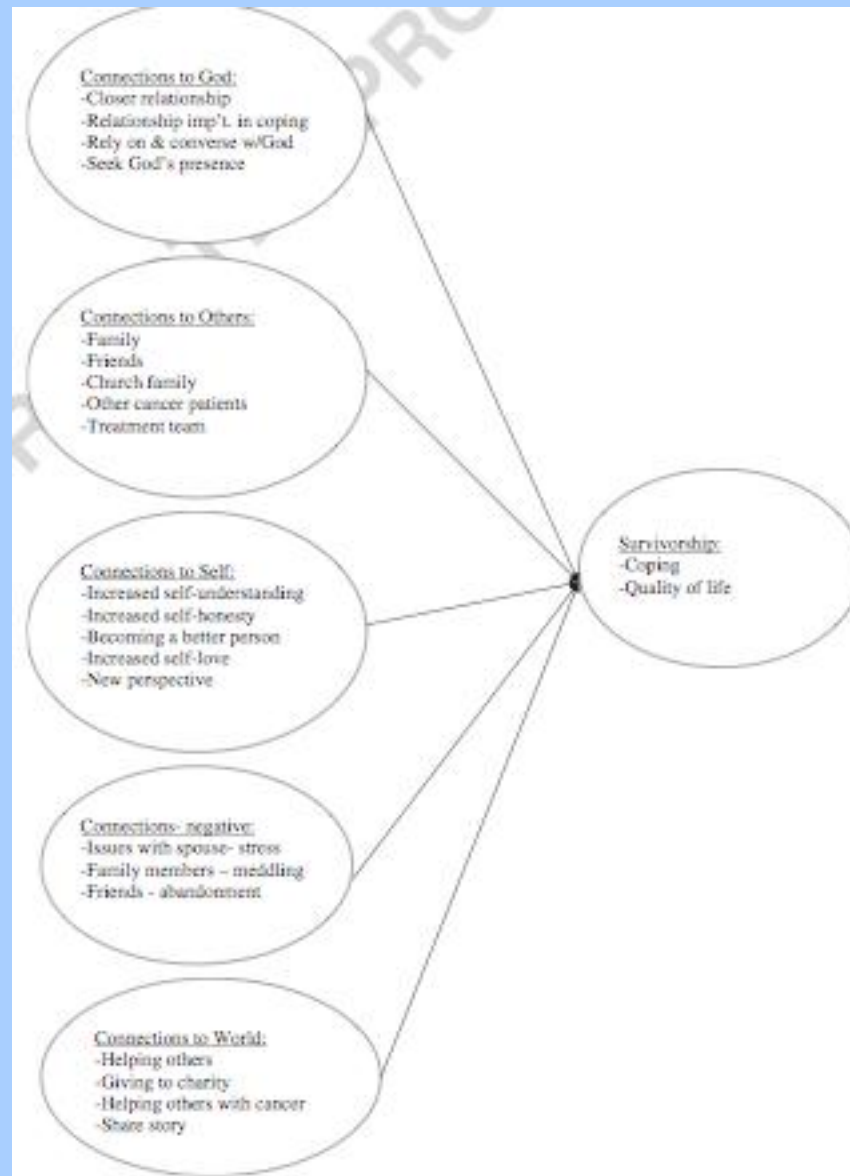
- Connections with Self (self-understanding, self-love, new perspective, negative connections)
- Connections with World (helping, giving, volunteering, sharing one's story)

Schulz, E., Holt, C.L., Caplan, L., Blake, V., Southward, P., Buckner, A., & Lawrence, H. (2008). Role of spirituality in cancer coping among African Americans: A qualitative examination. Journal of Cancer Survivorship, 2, 104-115.

Theory Development

- Qualitative findings and literature used to develop theoretical model of religious involvement and spirituality in cancer coping





Current Status

- Theory development:
 - Cancer risk, prevention, screening behaviors:
 - Data collection ongoing
 - Cancer coping:
 - Data collected, analysis ongoing

Future Steps



Future Steps

- Continue to develop and test theory in religion-health research and use it to guide future studies
- Begin to conduct more longitudinal studies in this area
- Continue to expand and refine measures of religious involvement for use in health research

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