

**GOD IMAGE INVENTORY (Lawrence, 1991)**  
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Source:

Hill, Peter C. & Hood, Ralph W., Jr. (Eds.) (1999). *Measures of religiosity*. Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, pp. 399-401

**Variable:** The God Image Inventory (GII) contains six subscales measuring different aspects of God image: Influence, Providence, Presence, Challenge, Acceptance, and Benevolence. In addition, the God Image Scales contain shortened versions of each of the six subscales for use in research.

**Description:** The GII contains a total of 156 items. Each of the six main scales consists of 22 items, while the two control scales (Faith and Salience) each contain 12 items. The instrument is scored on a four-point likert scale with 1 indicating strong agreement and 4 indicating strong disagreement with each statement. Many negatively worded items must be reverse scored. Each subscale should be scored separately by simply summing the items contained in it. Scores range from 22 to 88 for the six main subscales, and from 12 to 48 for the two control scales. A higher score represents a greater degree of the particular trait identified by the scale name.

Lawrence (1991) distinguishes between a person's God *concept* and his or her God *image*. The God concept is an intellectualized definition of God that is largely an artifact of cultural and religious education. God image, by contrast, is one's intuitive sense of God—what Lawrence describes as "a set of remembered and interpreted associations and experiences" (Lawrence, 1991, p. 134). Thus instead of focusing on beliefs about God, it focuses on a more affectively laden experience of God.

In light of this theory, Lawrence created the God Image Inventory to assess individuals' felt sense of who God is for them. Lawrence (1991) constructed six principal scales (Influence, Providence, Presence, Challenge, Acceptance, and Benevolence) and two control scales (Faith and Salience). Based on Rizzuto's (1979) suggestion that the God image is created, altered, and used primarily for the purpose of preserving a tolerable tension between affectively laden

experiences of self and others, Lawrence concluded that God image and self image are highly related to one another, and he sought to measure the relationship between the two. Lawrence used three basic themes for the self image as a framework for the six subscales: feelings of control, belonging, and fundamental goodness.

The theme of control was divided into two basic questions, one being more primitive and focused more on the self (How much can I control God?), the other being more focused on God (How much does God control me?). The first subdivision was labeled Influence, and the second, Providence.

The theme of belonging was likewise divided into two basic considerations, the first of which, drawn from the work of Winnicott (1953), suggests that "belonging" for the infant relates to the issue of presence and is experienced as the question "Is mother there for me?" Thus the first and most primitive belonging issue was labeled "Presence," which is reflected by the question Is God there for me? The second aspect of belonging relates to the work of Kirkpatrick (1986), who, following Bowlby (1969), out-lined two roles for attachment figures. The first, which corresponds well to the issue of presence, is labeled "Safe Haven" and refers to a person to whom the child may retreat and find present. The second consideration, called "Secure Base," relates to the same person's availability as he or she provides empowerment for the child to move out and explore the world. Thus the second belonging issue was labeled "Challenge," which can be represented by the question "Does God want me to grow?"

The theme of Goodness was again divided into two components. The first component, with more primitive emphasis on self image, can be characterized by the question "Am I good enough for God to love?" This dimension was labeled "Accep-

tance." The second component, more reflexive and oriented toward God image, can be summarized by the question "Is God the sort of Being who would want to love me?" This dimension was labeled "Benevolence." Since these six dimensions are hypothesized to be fundamental questions about God image, self image, and the relationship between the two throughout life, these are viewed as being relatively independent of developmental stages or theories. Lawrence (1991) points out that although this does not mean that these basic questions remain static throughout life, they are nonetheless measurable throughout life.

In addition to these six main scales, Lawrence (1991) added two shorter control scales for the convenience of the interpreter. The first one, Faith, attempts to measure the degree to which the subject believes in God as an existing being. The second, Saliency, purports to measure the degree to which people find their relationships with God important to their personal lives.

**Practical Considerations:** The test is self-administered and requires no special examiner skill to administer or score. The instructions explain the meaning of each choice (i.e., strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree) and emphasize that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. It is designed for research as well as pastoral and clinical use.

**Norms/standardization:** Lawrence (1991) standardized the GII on a national sample of 1,580 respondents. These standards were demonstrated to be adequate for the interpretation of scores of adult American Christians across sex, age, education, and marital status. The means for the eight subscales ranged from 36.1 (Saliency) to 73.3 (Benevolence). Standard deviations ranged from 7.0 (Faith) to 12.5 (Presence).

**Reliability:** Lawrence (1991) found internal consistency reliability coefficients ranging from .86 (Challenge) to .94 (Presence) for the main scales and the control scales. In a later phase of the study, Lawrence (1991) rechecked the internal consistency of the

eight scales on a new sample, since the previous reliability data was based on recomputations from the original 490-item survey. The results indicated essentially identical internal consistency reliability coefficients ranging from .85 (Challenge) to .94 (Presence). Lawrence (1991) computed interscale correlations on two occasions and found the average difference between the two sets of interscale correlations to be .03. The correlations ranged from .84 (Presence with Influence) to .44 (Providence with Benevolence). Thus Lawrence concluded that the GII scales demonstrate a stable pattern of intercorrelations, which indicates good temporal stability.

**Validity:** Contrary to the eight theoretical factors Lawrence hypothesized, a factor analysis with oblique rotation yielded 10 factors. Seven factors contained items from at least two different scales. In order to establish convergent and discriminate validity, Lawrence (1991) correlated the GII scales with seven other measures (Extrinsic, Intrinsic, Achievement, Self-Esteem, Altruism, Locus of Control, and God Control) with which GII scales were predicted to relate in particular ways. The extrinsic scale, as predicted, was found to correlate negatively with all the GII scales. However, not all the correlations were small, as predicted. Lawrence predicted that overall intrinsic religiosity would correlate most highly with Saliency, since it measures the relational importance of the God image to the subject. Lawrence further hypothesized that subjects with a greater sense of God's availability for them (Presence) would report a more satisfactory relationship with God, and thus would be more religious overall. Lawrence also predicted that intrinsicness would correlate second best with the Presence scale. As hypothesized, the Presence scale correlated the highest with the Saliency scale (.76) and second highest with the Presence scale (.69), thus supporting the validity of these two scales. The Achievement Scale did not perform as Lawrence had hypothesized, namely, that it would correlate positively with the Challenge

Scale. However, it related negatively with all the GII scales and reached significance only with the Providence Scale. Since it did not correlate significantly with Challenge, it neither confirmed nor falsified the validity of the Challenge Scale hypothesis, the Self-Esteem Scale correlated positively with the GII Acceptance Scale (.54). Although Lawrence expected the Altruism Scale to relate significantly better with the GII Benevolence Scale than with the other GII scales, and second best with the GII Acceptance Scale, it actually failed to discriminate the two GII scales, and demonstrated a very narrow range of correlations with all the GII scales (.22 to .26).

Lawrence hypothesized that Internal Locus of Control would correlate positively and most highly with the GII Influence Scale. However, it produced the second weakest correlation (-.42; the negative sign is due the way the Locus Control Scale is scored) thus not confirming the validity of the Influence Scale. Finally, consistent with Lawrence's expectations, the GII Providence Scale, which measures how much God controls the subject, related most highly to the God Control Scale (.63). The God Control Scale also correlated second highest with the GII Influence Scale (.50), the other control scale. This supports the construct validity of the Providence scale.

#### **Location:**

Lawrence, R. T. (1991). *The God Image Inventory: The development, validation, and standardization of a psychometric instrument for research, pastoral and clinical use in measuring the image of God*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Catholic University of America, Washington D. C.

#### **Subsequent Research:**

Confirming Lawrence's Key, T. L. (1995). Impact of inpatient psychiatric treatment on object relations maturity, self-esteem and God image (Doctoral dissertation. Rosemead Graduate School of Psychology, Biola University, 1995). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 55, B5568.

Knapp, C. L. (1993). *Personality transformation and belief in God An object relations understanding of the spiritual awakening program of alcoholics anonymous*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Center, MA.

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