ABSTRACT

This study examined the psychometric properties of the Relational Health Indices (RHI) with a group of 450 first year and senior students at a women's liberal arts college. The measure is based on the Relational Theory (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, Surrey, 1991; Miller & Stiver, 1997) and designed to assess growth-fostering Peer, Mentor, and Community relationships. For each of these three components, the following areas were investigated: internal reliability, factor structure, and convergent and concurrent validity. The RHI's components generally demonstrated good overall internal reliability, and the factor analyses confirmed the subscale structure: engagement, authenticity, empowerment, and conflict/difference. Further, associations between RHI scales and validation scales were significant and in the direction hypothesized.

The RHI is currently available for research purposes and continued scale and theory development.
INTRODUCTION

The importance of social support and relationships in women’s lives has been studied extensively. Social support’s positive effects on health and adjustment have been well-documented (Boyce, Harris, Silove, Morgan, Wilhelm, Kadzi-Pavlovic, 1998; Komproe, Rijken, Ros, Winnubst, 1997; Lee, 1997; Mitchell & Hodson, 1983; Stewart & Clarke, 1995; Testa, Miller, Downs, Panek, 1992; Valentine & Feinauer, 1993; Warren, 1997.) However, the essence of social support’s transformative characteristics has been less clear. Some studies have focused on the quantity and structure of social relationships (e.g., Hammer, 1981; Parks & Pilisuk, 1984). Others have inquired into people’s access to intimate relationships, and have identified the resources available in such social ties (e.g., Barrera & Ainley, 1983; House, 1981; Stokes & Wilson, 1984; Vaux, Riedel, & Stewart, 1987). Findings from these studies indicate that the quality and nature of individuals’ relationships are more important than their existence (Connor, Powers, & Buitena, 1979; Fiore, Becker, & Coppel, 1983; Leveton, Griffin, & Douglas, 1979). In particular, relationships that are intimate and mutual can facilitate self-disclosure, emotional resiliency, coping strategies, and additional social support (Genero, Miller, Surrey, Baldwin, 1992; Lin, 1986).

Along these lines, feminist scholars at the Wellesley College Stone Center have proffered the Relational Model as an innovative theoretical paradigm for the assessment of women’s psychological development and well-being (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, Surrey, 1991; Miller & Stiver, 1997). Whereas most traditional psychological theories focus on the task of separation-individuation as the